

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Wild

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

ISSUE
154

TRANS TARKINE TRAIL PROPOSAL
THE UNNAMED PREDATORY BEETLE
PROFILE: LLOYD NIELSEN
SAVAGE MOUNTAIN: K2 APPROACH
TROUBLESOME COMPANIONS
GUIDE TO KEEPING YOUR WITS
STRENGTH TRAINING BASICS
PORTRAIT: EMMA WALKER

Escape from Hokitika
Snow leopards in Ladakh
Quentin's lagoon of reflection
Winter warmer recipes
Tried and tested: Trekking poles
The terror of hi-tech navigation

*Trial by
adventure*

ISSN 1030-469X



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Wild

AUSTRALIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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Wild would like to acknowledge and show respect for the traditional custodians of Australia and of their elders, both past and present.

WARNING



The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover A helicopter arrives at Top Tororoha Hut.
Laura Waters

Contents A tent glows in the Australian Alps.
Mike Edmonson



"Western Civilization is a gun pointed at the head of this planet."

—TERENCE MCKENNA

Leave No Trace

It's been said that, while humans are currently causing the greatest extinction event of the past 60 million years or so, there will be remarkably little of us left behind for future species to investigate in the fossil record. Nothing more than a thin line of carbon and whatever skeletons survive our own activities prior to mineralisation.

While this is something of an illustrative example, it's not strictly true. In a way, humans are likely to cause one of the single greatest changes to the fossil record imaginable, the question is whether or not anyone will ever be capable of identifying it. The quote from writer and philosopher Terence McKenna I've selected for this brief essay could also perhaps be made more accurate. Firstly, 'Western Civilization' feels both vague and restrictive. Can it be used to apply to the pollution generated in China or the ongoing hunting of cetaceans by the Japanese? Perhaps the term 'capitalism' would be more apt.

Secondly, does McKenna use the turn of phrase "the head of this planet" to be more graphic, or is he referring to a particular segment of life on Earth? No doubt we are primarily pointing the gun at industry, pollution and climate change at ourselves along with a host of other organisms.

If we are to suppose some species living many millions of years in the future were able to analyse Earth's fossil record, we could assume they would initially be very confused (owing to all the piles of fossils from various epochs all jumbled together, many of them thousands of years and kilometres out of phase from their natural resting places). But should they have an accurate form of carbon dating or similar,

they would eventually puzzle out what happened.

While human-induced climate change is still a relatively new phenomenon, we have nevertheless been driving other species to the brink of extinction since modern humans left Africa, if not before. Most notable of these are our closest hominid relatives: *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthalensis* and potentially a few others. Assuming they occupied a very similar ecological niche to us, there's little wonder that we outcompeted and outbred them into extinction.

More confusing, yet still very damning, is our penchant for hunting other species into oblivion, usually beginning with the largest and working our way down from there.

Of course, this isn't an argument to allow invasive species to persist wherever they may threaten native ones, but rather an observation on the deleterious nature of our cultural behaviour.

By the time you read this, the 45th federal parliament of Australia is likely to have been decided. As one of the simplest ways the vast majority of people can make a real difference (even if it doesn't feel like it), the election booths are the place where we can start to change our course. Hopefully we start choosing one of minimising our impacts, rather than continually exacerbating them.

Campbell Phillips
Editor

Wild

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Issue 153, May-June 2016

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Laurie wins a Therm-a-Rest NeoAir Voyager valued at \$219.95. A comfortable sleeping mat combining the patent-pending stability of WaveCore™ construction with a reflective ThermoCapture™ layer for added warmth.



QUIT CARPING

As a bushwalker and recreational angler, I was quite dismayed to read the letter written by Leigh Ackland in issue 153 of *Wild* with the title "Fishermen Fiends?". The claims in the letter in my view contain many errors, generalisations and distortions. Leigh firstly claims he 'often asks rangers in National Parks if it's OK kill some of the protected wildlife and eat them'. Really? He also claims fishermen 'kill fish for fun'. According to him, fishermen are cruel, drowning fish in air etc., where in fact the vast majority of thinking anglers only kill fish they intend to eat quickly and humanely, which incidentally also retains the eating quality of the fish flesh. There are, no doubt, some callous fishermen around. I have come across a few, but I have also met a small number of Bogan Bushwalkers who leave a trail of rubbish behind them and light fires when and where they shouldn't. I have also come across the odd zealot among people who care only about the welfare of animals. They of course are not representative of the vast majority of people who participate in these activities and who are well balanced and well behaved. Leigh writes about double standards and inconsistencies in our attitude to the treatment of fish compared to other animals – I think he means all of here us not just anglers. Well Leigh, I don't believe that I – like most other people – am inconsistent in my attitudes at all. Like the vast majority of people in this world,

I am an omnivore i.e.: I eat meat and vegetables. Meat includes fish and other meat products: rabbits, ducks, chickens, cattle, sheep, pigs etc.; all of these require animals to be killed. I haven't included the kookaburras and possums that Leigh suggests (albeit sarcastically) on this list, as they are protected wildlife, as are some fish species. I don't kill or eat any of these. Most omnivores get their meat and fish from the fish shop or the butchers. They are, in fact, paying someone to do the killing and cleaning for them and this is fine with me – we get our meat from the butchers too. Fish, on the other hand, we catch, kill and clean ourselves. If Leigh or others are omnivores, but object to me doing my own catching, killing and cleaning, that would in my view be inconsistent – possibly even hypocritical. There are of course a percentage of the population who, for a number of reasons are vegetarian. Good luck to them; I have no criticism to make. Everyone has the right to make their own dietary choices, provided that their menu does not include protected animals or protected fish. Finally, Leigh claims that a large percentage of fish stocks are overexploited or depleted. Well, this may be the case in other parts of the world, but it certainly does not apply here. The various Fisheries Management Authorities in Australia do an excellent job of managing and protecting the viability of our fisheries. This is done by looking after the marine and freshwater environment, protecting any threatened species, placing catch limits, size limits and designating 'no catch' or sanctuary zones where necessary. The Victorian Government has decided that recreational angling is such a worthwhile community activity that it is putting a lot of effort into the promotion of angling with the aim of having one million recreational fishermen in Victoria by 2020.

**Laurie Benbow
East Keilor, VIC**

A RED HERRING?

In response to Leigh Ackland's letter (*Wild* 153) he seems to tacitly suggest that hook/line recreational fishing be discontinued while appearing to let commercial fishers off the hook. If hook fishing is cruel, should we also look at the harvesting and treatment of the commercial catch? Methods here involve both longline hook fishing and trawling. Caught fish are then left to die or frozen to death in the ship's hold. Does Leigh want this banned also or just

the recreational 'fun' fishing? In a global context, fish are generally regarded as a valuable source of low fat protein, in addition to being high in the healthy omega oils. Many countries, particularly in South East Asia and the Pacific islands, regard fish as a staple diet. Personally, I'm not a fan of 'catch and release', but I rate fish as my favourite meat and so venture out about once a week to catch a meal. On landing a fish, I immediately use a skewer to kill it and put it straight on ice. I don't consider this to be 'fun' as Leigh would suggest. I always release any under or oversize fish and only take what I need. Hook fishing? Not much worse than the yarding and slaughter of other meat animals. For those who want to cast their lines a little further there is ample scientific evidence to suggest that fish do not feel pain as humans do. Someone check that 'net'!

**Ted Potter
Newmerella, VIC**

NAMING RIGHTS

I am writing to congratulate *Wild* for having the courage to print 'Walks in a Name?'. History is complicated and messy, so any decision that hinges on that is also complicated, but too often it seems we prefer not to have the conversation. I have very mixed feelings about renaming landmarks. Chester is right that there is irony in that, but any name is arbitrary. A kangaroo by any other name is a hopping marsupial, even if that particular name was originally used by only one relatively small group of Aboriginal people. Looking abroad, no one questions where Rome and Florence are, despite no Italian having ever called them that. What of Easter Island, with its three names? And there was no question what Mount Kosciuszko was named for before the campaign to restore the Polish spelling... but not the pronunciation. Anyone with an Anglicised name may find irony in that too, including the Irish, Scots and Welsh. And for the Aboriginal names themselves? Like Chester, I have grown up with and love the sound of many local Aboriginal place names, but translated I live downstream of Meeting Place near where the River Sounds Like Thunder (in flood, before it was dammed) turns north to meet the Big River and the Rocky River, on route to Big Floods and Very Rocky. As names they're not great works of imagination. So I think there are many perspectives on renaming. It's just as valid to ask what various Aboriginal people called a landmark as it is to ask what

various Europeans called it, or indeed whether some newer name has emerged. I don't have any answers, because I don't think there are any absolute criteria, but thanks for hosting the discussion.

Brian Farrelly
Canberra, ACT

ODE TO FEDDER

Will is to be congratulated for reproducing Bob Brown's "Macchiato on the Mountain" (153) originally printed in Hobart's Mercury newspaper. I think what sparked this was the idea voiced by a Tasmanian Huon Valley councillor that consideration should be given to constructing easier access to Lake Gieves at the foot of Australia's tallest cliff (Federation Peak) so that everyone and anyone, especially visiting tourists, could see it. Supposedly this would entail some sort of vehicular access and of course one former Tasmanian premier did forecast that 'the Cracroft Valley would be logged one day'. Possibly plans recently suggested for developing the Cradle Valley and the successful opening this year of Tasmania's Three Capes Track have given impetus towards altering our unique style of bushwalking to something more congenial; akin, for example, to what's available up under and around the European Alps. As for macchiato, my wife recently heard a middle-aged lady from Launceston say that, while she had never been up to the top of Hobart's Mount Wellington, she might consider such an excursion if there were some decent shops up there. It takes all sorts! As Bob said, Sir Edmund Hillary reputedly described Fedder as 'Australia's only real mountain' and over the years since the first ascent in 1949, it has become an increasingly precious national asset, deserving our greatest care. While Cradle

Six months after the 2016 Tasmanian bushfires

Credit: Brad Lester



"I hope this bush regenerates soon."



"It's easier to pretend to be extinct by hiding in the scrub..."



"...than wearing these tight fitting pademelon costumes."

THE WINNER: BUSHWALKING TIP

Bushwalking with four kids can get expensive especially when they really like the trekking poles you have. What to do? Knowing that they will probably destroy them or out grow them in a very short time. Yes, you can give them a stick but not really the best way. Look for a set of old ski poles. You can pick them up at garage sales, secondhand stores, op shops or online. They are aluminium and lightweight. You can usually get a pair for around \$5 - \$10. Then just size them up on the kids, pop the handle off, cut the pole down to size, and finally pop the handle back on. You now have a set of lightweight, tough-as-custom-made trekking poles. The

kids love them for walking, poking things and the occasional swordfight.

Anton Meyer
Warragul, VIC

Anton wins a Petzl **TIKKA R+**, valued at \$154.95. This water resistant headlamp outputs up to 170 lumens and features Petzl's famous Reactive Lighting Technology. It is compact and USB rechargeable, ideal for dynamic, energetic activities.



Mountain can rightly be regarded in my opinion as the people's mountain, Fedder I like to think of as the bushwalkers', trampers' and mountaineers' mountain. Unique in its requirement ultimately of some rock-climbing (with assorted grades on offer!) to reach the pinnacle, this is only achieved after a time-hallowed and arduous approach measured in days. Plains to be traversed, forests

and scrub (including horizontal!) to be negotiated, rivers to be crossed, satellite peaks to be ascended and descended, mud cliffs and all. Then there's Fedder's silent partner with trump cards - the weather. Not even in New Zealand is there anything quite like it. (Sir Edmund didn't quite say that, but we forgive him!)

Kevin Doran
South Hobart, TAS



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Into WHITE

Ben Hindmarsh from Paddington, NSW writes: "I was a shot of my brother, Dan, covered in rime and lost in a storm while climbing Hochstetter Dome in New Zealand's Mount Cook National Park. You can see the photographer, my other brother, Rick, reflected in his goggles. Taken with an Olympus Stylus Tough TG-4."

Photographer's checklist: A questions of ethics

Every now and then when you are out in the field taking photographs you are faced with an ethical decision. How you react to these situations can also affect how you photograph your subjects. There are a few unwritten rules within the photography community that one should try and adhere to while out an about.

- One of the more common scenarios you may be faced with in the field occurs when you want to capture an amazing scene but there is some displeasing element ruining the shot. For example, a common one I see in the field is damaged foliage and plant life around popular waterfalls or grand views. If you are faced with a really nice view or location that is obstructed by plants or other natural objects it is best to just move on to a different location or viewpoint, instead of damaging the view for others. A good photographer will always find a way to get the right composition without having to 'stage' anything.
- Another pet hate for many photographers is having another photographer encroach on your shot. A classic example happened to me at Yosemite National Park in the USA when I was shooting the famous 'Tunnel View' scene, made famous by Ansel Adams. I was set up with tripod and ready to shoot at sunset when another photographer came along, set up his tripod and partially obscured my shot. Be aware of others around you and don't encroach. Make your shot your own, be unique and find a viewpoint that differs from others.
- If you are ever in the field, capturing the beauty of this world, one rule overrides all others. Safety first. Keeping in mind your own personal safety, if you see a person in distress, your first duty should not be to pick up your camera. Stop and check in if this person is ok. If it's an emergency, contact the emergency services and get help. No photo is worth the loss of someone's life or being severely injured.
- If the injured party is an animal, take the time to think about what the best approach to the situation. If possible, notify appropriate services before approaching. When the Black Saturday bushfires tore through parts of Victoria, there was a classic image of the koala receiving help from the firefighter, supplying the animal a cool drink of water. By helping this animal, not only did this firefighter show a caring attitude to the animal, but also provided one of the shots of the decade for the lucky photographer



Award-winning landscape photographer **Cameron Blake** runs weekend workshops and six-day tours in Tasmania. His next tour departs for Cradle Mountain in November, 2016.



tasphoto.com.au



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outdoor kit, send your humorous, inspiring or spectacular shots to wild@primecreative.com.au.

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Wild Magazine

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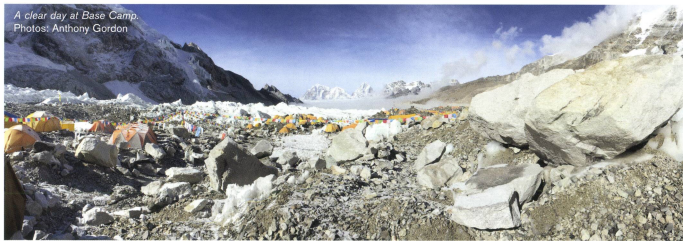


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A clear day at Base Camp.
Photos: Anthony Gordon



Everest climbing season highlights false economy

While some consider it successful, this year's climbing season on Mount Everest has given some experts cause to highlight the key problems that beset commercial climbing operators and their employees.

After two consecutive years of tragedy, many mountaineers have been hoping that this year would bring all the right conditions required to allow the several hundreds visitors a chance of reaching the summit.

Unfortunately, within a few days of opening, severe frostbite and altitude sickness took its toll on the first groups of climbers to be guided to the top.

There were also deaths, including the tragic loss of Melbourne woman and finance lecturer at Monash University, Maria Styrdom.

The youngest Australian to summit Everest, Alyssa Azar is reported to have passed Styrdom on her ascent, but said she hadn't realised the woman was having trouble.

"It was difficult, particularly because she was coming down and that's when it happened," Azar told Fairfax in early June.

Meanwhile, the ongoing deaths and injuries on Everest have given accomplished mountaineer Andrew Lock cause to comment



on the lack of experience of many climbers, which has obvious implications for the responsibilities of climbing operators.

"I saw media reports about the lady who died up there, saying she was an experienced climber because she had already climbed Kilimanjaro (5895m) and Denali (6190m)," Lock told The Weekend Australian in a telephone interview.

"She was not an experienced climber, she was an experienced client.

"In every case she had handed responsibility for knowing how to climb, risk management and expedition leadership to others."

While questions remain to be asked about how this industry can be appropriately regulated, safety has been improved by the appearance of a Sherpa Rescue Team.

Created by Anthony Gordon, who operates as the team's Base Camp manager, the unit consists of five expert Sherpas who are charged with the sole purpose of providing support to stricken climbers on the mountain.

The Sherpa Rescue Team is in turn supported by US medic Jeff Evans and two dedicated rescue helicopters.

"When I first began talking about this idea with a Sherpa guide, there was no dedicated service or support network on Everest beyond the Himalayan Rescue Associate, which acts more like a GP's office at Base Camp, and the services provided by some of the larger commercial operations for their customers," Gordon told Wild.

In order to fund his idea, Gordon set about selling concept to the Travel Channel in the US, which is now in production with a six-episode TV series that follows the Sherpa Rescue Team in their endeavours.

"The show will purely highlight the efforts of the Sherpa team not only saving lives on the mountain, but in the Khumbu region as well.

"This year we saved 52 lives and hope to return next year with an even larger team."

The rescue team is supported by a medic and two dedicated helicopters



Tragedy continues on Great Barrier Reef

The ongoing devastation of the Great Barrier Reef has been further compounded with news that a mammal species endemic to the region may have been wiped out as a result of climate change.

Researchers recently visited Bramble Cay, a small coral cay off the coast of north Queensland, the only known place where the Bramble Cay melomys was known to exist.

The rodent species, described as a large rat by the first Europeans to have seen it, was last seen in 2009.

Ongoing degradation of habitat as a result of rising sea levels and disappearing vegetation is believed to lie at the cause of the species' decline. In 2014, an extensive search for the species was led by Ian Gynther from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection in Queensland, which saw 150 traps laid for a six-night period.

The traps caught none of the Bramble Cay melomys, leading scientists to recommend the species status be changed from 'endangered' to 'extinct' – the first mammal species to be wiped out as a direct result of human-induced climate change.

Breaking the Cycle journey nears completion

Profiles in Wild 149, Kate Leeming has since continued on her goodwill mission that will eventually see her crossing Antarctica by bike. Her campaign, Breaking the Cycle: South Pole, aims to raise funds for community development projects, as well as creating global awareness for poverty-related issues, such as Leeming witnessed while cycling across Africa.

Having just returned from training in Greenland, Leeming now hopes to finalise plans for her non-profit organisation, Breaking the Cycle Foundation, which she hopes to have in place before the South Pole expedition that's "planned for the end of the year" Leeming said.

The purpose of her Greenland visit, she explained, was to prepare for the final expedition, which will be undertaken on her purpose-built, all-wheel-drive bicycle.

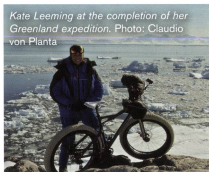
"Apart from a few minor issues, the brand new Christini all-wheel drive polar bike (mark II) held up beautifully," Leeming said. "It really came into its own on rough surfaces such as at Sastruggi, where the front wheel drive grips and helps me climb over the lumps and bumps.

"The all-wheel-drive system makes it possible to ride on more difficult surfaces than a regular fatbike."

Kitted up in Mont apparel, Julbo goggles and carrying a Hilleberg tent, combined with some additional training over the next few months, Leeming is confident she'll overcome the epic struggle ahead.

"This Greenland training expedition has reconnected me with the reality of how tough this Antarctic bicycle crossing will be. It is helping me to fine tune my preparation physically and with all the key equipment and systems."

Leeming also has plans to train in the Himalayas and more locally around Mounts Buller and Stirling while she continues to raise funds for her South Pole expedition.

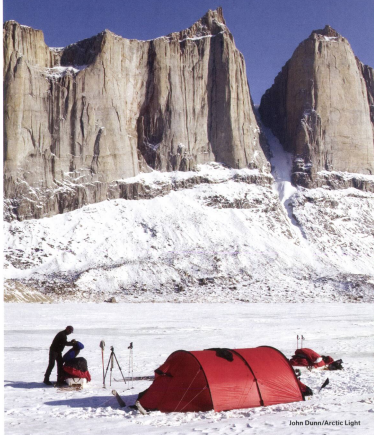


Kate Leeming at the completion of her Greenland expedition. Photo: Claudio von Planta

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John Dunn/Arctic Light

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10 minutes with...

Kevin Sumption, chief executive and director of the Australian National Maritime Museum

Opening on the 23rd of June, the 51st Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition will be held at the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) in Darling Harbour. Currently on loan from the Natural History Museum in London, the event showcases 100 beautiful images, capturing quirky and alluring animal behaviour and wild landscapes. Launched in 1965, the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition now receives more than 42,000 entries for its 21 image categories, with both an adult and junior competition.

In order to discover more about how the touring exhibition came to be hosted at ANMM, we spoke briefly with director and chief executive of the museum, Kevin Sumption.

Kevin, can you tell us a little about your own career and how you came to work at the Australian National Maritime Museum?

I started out my career in graphic design before becoming a lecturer in Design Theory and History at UTS, where I taught digital media in cultural institutions among other subjects. I then moved into museum management and curating and have since worked for the Powerhouse Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich and for the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) on two occasions. I was appointed as CEO and Director of ANMM in 2012.

What does your role largely entail at the museum?

As the director, it is my role to lead the



Kevin Sumption at the pier by the ANMM
Photo: Supplied

strategic direction of the museum and to inspire and motivate our staff and volunteers as we head towards becoming the museum of the future.

Can you tell us a little about the museum itself?

The Australian National Maritime Museum was opened in 1991 and is located in Sydney's Darling Harbour. It stands on land traditionally owned by the Gadigal people who found a rich source of fish and shellfish in the sheltered waters of the harbour and Cockle Bay.

ANMM is Australia's national centre for maritime collections, exhibitions, research and technology. It presents a changing program of

stimulating exhibitions and events to share Australia's maritime history and connect the stories, objects, people and places that are part of our country's narrative.

For how long has this exhibition been hosted at the museum and why is this the case? What is the thinking behind having the exhibit hosted there?

Programs at the museum reflect a diversity of maritime topics, from the interactions people have with the oceans – defence, shipbuilding, exploration and leisure – to the nature of the ocean environment itself. Museum exhibitions have explored ocean environments and animals and also the inspiration that artists and photographers have drawn from these animals and places.

We are delighted that we can now bring the world's best wildlife photography – much of it featuring aquatic and marine environments and creatures – to the museum in this fantastic exhibition. Truly great images of nature can transform the way people look at the natural world, challenge opinion and stimulate debate and that is what we hope to do.

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition is one of the most innovative and popular photographic competitions of its kind. This is the first time ANMM will host this exhibition so we are very excited to be able to offer our visitors the chance to enjoy these unforgettable and inspiring images.

What are some of your favourite pieces or photographers and why?

I used to live in South Africa and enjoyed bodyboarding while I was there. So for me, one stand-out photo is 'The shark surfer', submitted by Thomas P. Peschak (Germany/South Africa). The symmetry of it conjures images of harmony and seems to be an expression of the beautiful relationship between humans and the sea, a connection which we all must treasure.

One of the winning images is by Australian author, explorer and conservation photographer Michael Aw. His image, 'A whale of a mouthful' shows a magnificent Bryde's whale, ripping through a mass of sardines and gulping hundreds in a single pass. It is a truly incredible image.

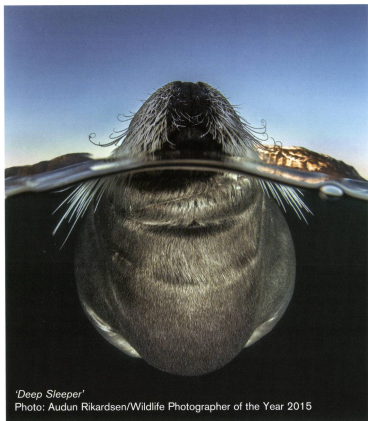
How much does entry cost for this exhibition and what else should visitors take the time to see while they're there?

The 51st Wildlife Photographer of the Year



'Turtle Flight'

Photo: David Doubilet/ Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015



'Deep Sleeper'

Photo: Audun Rikardsen/Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015

Exhibition opens on June 23. Tickets are \$20 adults, \$12 concessions and children go free.

While visiting ANMM, visitors should also take time to visit our Eora Gallery, which houses our collection of rare indigenous maritime artefacts, such as the elaborately carved and painted Pukamani burial poles from the Tiwi people, ceremonial sculptures, handwoven works from Arnhem Land and my particular favourite, hollow log coffins decorated with the story of Māna the shark.

All of ANMM's permanent galleries, including the Eora Gallery, are free for visitors to come and explore.

Also not to be missed is Action Stations, our recently launched \$12 million cutting-edge attraction at Darling Harbour which offers an insight into the Royal Australian Navy and life at sea. It features a cinematic experience and a high-tech discovery and exploration space, showcasing 22 interactive and digital products.

The visitor experience on board the vessels has been completely revamped with multimedia projections and innovative soundscapes complementing the action out on the high seas.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition is developed and produced by the Natural History Museum, London.



www.anmm.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/coming/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year

Wild Diary

World Rogaining Championships, NT, July 23-24

It may be too late to register a team, but volunteers and spectators are all welcome to get involved and see the world's premier navigation competition. worldrogainingchamps.com.au

Cross Country Ski Week 2016, NSW, August 6-14

Variety of events and activities held at Perisher to celebrate and promote excellence in the field of cross country skiing. www.perisherski.com.au

The Great Adventure Challenge, WA, July 30

A team-based adventure race that includes mountain biking, trail running, kayaking and

coasteering as well as a number of 'mystery tasks'. greatadventurechallenge.com.au

Bushwalking Pilgrimage, QLD, July 29-31

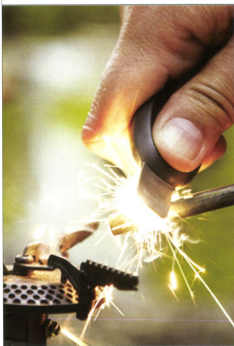
Annual bushwalking event hosted by the Brisbane Bushwalkers Club that takes in scenic wilderness in southeast Queensland. www.bbww.org.au

Kosciuszko Winter Camping

Adventures, NSW, July-September
Mike Edmonson's private photo tours of Kosciuszko run throughout winter. Great for improving fitness, cross country ski skills and photographic nous. www.mikeedmonson.com.au

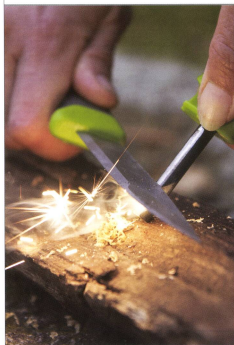


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Ticked off: An introduction to Lyme disease

by Alexander Robey

If you're an Australian who loves getting outdoors, regardless of whether it's just for working, bushwalking, bird watching or the occasional holiday, you are probably at risk of being bitten by a tick – and that could have much more dire consequences than you'd expect.

Many sufferers of Lyme disease live with the symptoms without knowing they have contracted it, and this situation is exacerbated by the vast majority of health practitioners who don't recognise its presence or have the ability to diagnose it.

Tennille Pooley, an awareness advocate for Lyme disease, is a sufferer; so too are her husband and four children. While unsure of the exact vector, Pooley believes she contracted Lyme via sexual transmission from her husband. Even more concerning is the possibility that each of her children contracted the disease in utero.

"Most people don't realise the potential this disease has to pass from human to human," Pooley says. "Most think it is only transmitted via ticks."

LYME DISEASE: CAUSES AND VECTORS

In places like the US, it's accepted that Lyme disease is caused when bacteria from the genus *Borrelia* infect a human. The spiral-shaped microorganism penetrates muscles, joints and major organs. It's ability to also penetrate connective tissue produces the potential for a multi-system infections through the body, resulting in devastating consequences. Many animals may act as a host for *Borrelia*, which can be found in their bloodstream. It's easy to see how a range of blood-sucking parasites might transmit these bacteria from one host to another, but for a long time Lyme disease has been primarily associated with ticks.

Important note: Ticks may in fact be the chief cause of Lyme disease in Australia, but chances of contracting the disease is reduced if ticks are removed safely. All care must be taken not to squeeze the tick's body during removal. Instead, a fine pair of tweezers should be used to grasp the tick as close to the bite as possible, before pulling upward with steady, even pressure.

Beyond other parasites and the possibility of sexual transmission, Pooley also warns of the dangers of eating undercooked meat, like steak. Just about any situation where the blood of another host is transferred to a new one creates the potential for infection. As a result, the incidence of the disease can be accompanied by co-infections from bacteria like *Mycoplasma*, *Bartonella*, *Coxiella*, *Chlamydia* and *Rickettsia*; viruses such as parvovirus, Epstein Barr and cytomegalovirus; and parasites like *Babesia* and *Leishmania*.

SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

Early stage symptoms in humans may present as headaches, muscle aches, pains in joints, lethargy, fever and flu like symptoms, a compromised immune system with enlarged lymph glands and occasionally a circular rash around the tick bite, or slowly increasing neurological challenges.

Late stage symptoms may present as chronic fibromyalgia or similarly to neurological conditions, degenerative organic brain conditions and muscular degenerative disorders. The infection may mimic other conditions like Alzheimer's disease, autism, seizures, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, lupus, motor neurone disease or chronic fatigue syndrome.

In Pooley's case, she was eventually wheelchair bound as a result of the disease and her children have experienced seizures, cognitive decline, vision impairment and a range of physical complaints.

Ro Privett, an outdoor educator who contracted Lyme disease, says, "One of the worst symptoms is insomnia".

"Not only is trouble sleeping difficult in itself, the circulating neurotoxins build up overnight to cause a heavy drunk-like state of affairs in the morning. Suffers awake exhausted and groggy. For most, the slowly become a shadow of who they once were, with diminished drive and motivation and day to day life is all about managing their reduced energy levels."

Due to the unrecognised status of the disease, many sufferers find they are misdiagnosed with another medical condition and some may never be diagnosed correctly.

"Sufferers can spend years consulting with dozens of different specialists often to be told the problem is psychosomatic, it's 'all in your head'. This inevitably leads to depression and feelings of isolation," explains Privett. In Pooley's case, she fought to be taken seriously over many years, spending around \$100,000 on various medical appointments before she was diagnosed with Lyme.

"I would pay hundreds for a medical appointment to be told I was neurotic. Even the psychologists thought I was making it up." Not to be deterred, Pooley committed to much research online and eventually spent \$2750 on having a test in the US for Lyme disease.

John Coleman is a naturopath has treated around 300 patients with infections using a combination of lifestyle change, supplements and specialised herbal formulas. He works cooperatively with Lyme literate/aware doctors whenever possible to achieve the best outcome. "There is a great deal of ineffectual argument in Australia at the moment focusing on whether Lyme disease exists in Australia. There are hundreds of Australians infected overseas

(USA and Europe mainly, but many other countries) who can't get appropriate treatment, even though they do not claim to have been infected in Australia.

"Much of the problem lies in calling it 'Lyme disease'," Coleman explains.

"The Chief Medical Officer of Australia has acknowledged that there is a 'Lyme-like' infection here and *Borrelia* species have been found in a number of Australian animals." Coleman concludes borreliosis and common co-infections seem to be at epidemic proportions right now.

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) currently estimates up to 300,000 people in Australia are infected. Some were almost certainly infected overseas, but there is a large population of infected patients who have never left Australia, which provides a strong indication of a more local problem.

SAFEGUARDS AND REFERENCES

The best way to protect against Lyme disease is to prevent tick bites, be aware of symptoms and to know how to safely remove ticks. Cover as much of your body when working or playing in the outdoors and strongly consider using insect repellents, DEET for skin and permethrin for clothes. Check yourself regularly.

Never use petrol or chemicals to remove a tick, or rub Vaseline on the tick to suffocate it. They breathe through their bottom and therefore there is a risk the tick will vomit their stomach contents into the bloodstream. If you develop a large bullseye rash, keep the tick in a sealed bag and seek a 'Lyme-aware' practitioner for treatment.

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia provided the technical information within this article. For further information:

www.lymedisease.org.au

Tennille Pooley's personal information was used with permission. www.tickedoffandtravelling.com John Coleman is a Victorian Naturopath and a member of the ANPA. www.returtoastillness.com.au Ro Privett is an outdoor educator and sufferer of Lyme disease. www.wildexposure.com.au

FURTHER READING

Lyme Disease in Australia. Dr N. Macfadden
www.allergy.org.au
www.tiara.org.au
www.mdcnet.usyd.edu.au

Alexander Robey (article author) is a keen outdoor enthusiast who works as a mental health professional. He studied health psychology as part of his post-graduate degree and now runs a private practice as a registered clinical hypnotherapist and psychotherapist.



www.assertdevelopment.com

Un-named beetle predator

Percolestus blackburni Sloane

The predatory ground beetle *Percolestus blackburni* Sloane is only found in the Victorian alpine region from sub alpine and alpine sites down to about 1500 metres above sea level. Little is known about this species that lives in grasslands and heathlands. It does not even have a common name. Adults are thought to breed in late spring with larvae developing over the summer as larvae have been occasional found at this time. Similar to other alpine species it may take two years to complete a lifecycle. Like all predatory ground beetles, *Percolestus blackburni* feed on a variety of soft-bodied critters, their favorite being earthworms. Other insects consumed would include caterpillars, scale insects found on alpine shrubs and even invasive slugs. This group of beetles is important in regulating plant feeding critters and keeping out invasive invertebrate species.

It has been determined that populations of this flightless beetle are genetically distinct with low genetic diversity within populations; indicating separation since before the last ice age with limited movement between mountain tops. In conjunction with studies of other alpine species, these findings have led to the Australian Alps referred to as a series of "sky islands".

Percolestus blackburni belongs to the beetle family Carabidae, with numerous species found throughout Australia. In the Victorian Alps over 20 species have been recorded from pitfall traps (a test tube placed in the ground so critters moving along the ground will fall in and get caught). Contrary to what one may think, the Victorian alps contain a high number of carabid species as indicated by comparing two studies; seventeen species recorded from twenty Bogong High Plain grassland sites whereas only seven species were recorded from twenty southwest Victorian native grassland sites. Over 70 percent of individuals found on the Bogong High Plains are *Percolestus blackburni*, with other species extremely rare. For example, *Conchitella clivinoides* Moore was described from only one specimen collected from near Mt Hotham in 1962. Since then only another seven specimens are known to have been collected. This genera is only found in Australia from an extremely restricted region. Since being described, *Conchitella clivinoides* have been only collected from one specific area of the Bogong High Plain. Yet despite its rarity, *Conchitella clivinoides* is still not listed under the EPBC Act List of Threatened Fauna. Genetic

analysis of a more widespread species *Eurylychnus blagruvi* Laporte also distributed at lower altitudes in forests suggests there may in fact be three species. Another species, *Scopodes simplex* Blackburn, which is also found in NSW, is a true alpine ecosystem specialist as it is generally found near the tops of mountains (e.g. Mount Kosciuszko, Mount Hotham, Mount Nelse) and snow patches. Snow patch herbfields occur on steep, leeward slopes in the Australian Alps, where snow persists well into the spring or summer growing season. Snow patch herbfields are one of the rarest ecosystems in Australia. This important group of predatory ground beetles comprise of numerous species that occupy various different environments in a variety of ways, often with extremely restricted distributions.

How these unique communities that exist in an extremely restricted part of Australia will continue to adapt to environmental change and invasive species is unknown. But first we must appreciate these small, unseen windmills. Then we must understand what species are present, what their role is and how they disperse.

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love,
we will love only what we understand,
and we will understand only what we can identify."
— Mark Teller



The un-named beetle predator of which relatively little is known.
Photo: Michael Nash

Michael Nash has worked as an entomologist since completing his PhD in 2008, focusing on invertebrates response to climate change in the Australian Alps and Integrated Pest Management in Vineyards and broad-acre farming systems.

Trans Tarkine to boost tourism, conservation

A new walking track in the Tarkine would become the longest in Tasmania, paving the way for a National Park and create measurable benefits for the economy

View N from Rupert Point



The Bob Brown Foundation, along with key supporters, has officially launched a proposal for a Trans Takayna/Tarkine Track in a bid to boost tourism in Tasmania.

Having commissioned an assessment study from Martin Hawes into the viability of a 100-plus-kilometre walking track in the island's northwest last year, the conservation group believes the project would result in a world-class experience comparable to any international, multi-day walk.

The proposal includes the development of the track itself as well as 10 raised-platform camping sites and associated toilet facilities, costing \$20 million overall.

Bob Brown Foundation was joined by the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Corinna Wilderness Experience, Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, Tarkine Wilderness Lodge and Tarkine Trails to announce the proposal in a press release distributed in early June.

'A Trans Takayna/Tarkine Track will create hundreds of direct employment opportunities in the northwest and over time create many more indirect opportunities as the Takayna/Tarkine's reputation and the Track become a world-class, 'must-do' attraction in the state,' the release stated.

Currently, less than five percent of the Tarkine is protected by National Park status, with the remaining 95 percent vulnerable to logging and mining interests despite the fact that the area fulfils the criteria for receiving UNESCO World Heritage status.

Tarkine Trails director Greg Irons has been offering private walking experiences in the region for years, with three unique tours being offered in the ancient rainforests and along the raw coastlines of the Tarkine. Despite being one of the few operators in the area, Irons believes Tarkine Trails has much to gain from the creation of the proposed Trans Tarkine Track.

"We have come into this project in the knowledge that we're likely to lose two of our existing walking tracks in the development of the Trans Tarkine Trail, as the most sensible course would overlap with our own routes," Irons said.

"Our aim and part of Tarkine Trails' mission is to see Tarkine become a household name and for its conservation to be prioritised. A public-access track would help this cause immensely."

Tarkine Trails would also benefit in having the expertise and infrastructure available to begin offering guided walks along the new track as soon as it's open.

It's not just the wilderness and his business that would benefit, Irons explained, but the local economy in general would receive a boost from the track.

"The creation and completion of this track would add more jobs to the local economy, while increased visitation would bring more money in for the surrounding communities. If it led to the Tarkine becoming a National Park, these effects would be significantly more pronounced."

Hawes' assessment for the Trans Takayna/Tarkine Track outlines a 10-day walk (of a standard comparable to the Overland Track) that begins near the Tarkine Wilderness Lodge (an hour's drive from Burnie) and bears southwest towards the coast, before ending with a cruise up the Pieman River to the eco-village of Corinna.

Further improving accessibility, the proposed trail is bisected by the Wilderness Explorer Road, which would allow the route to be feasibly broken into two five-day segments. The Bob Brown Foundation also proposed that the Takayna/Tarkine wilderness area be returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, allowing members of that community to operate and manage the eventuating asset.

In follow-up statement, Bob Brown made clear that the proposal is designed to lay the groundwork for the Tarkine to gain further protection in the future.

"We put this plan forward as a centrepiece for a future Tarkine protected with World Heritage status. Our foundation also backs wild areas of the Tarkine returning to Aboriginal traditional ownership, and sees a major role for Aboriginal rangers in presenting the heritage of the region to visitors using the Trans Tarkine Track," said Brown.

Of the proposed \$20 million in costs, \$17 million is estimated for track construction, \$2 million for campsites, \$400,000 for vegetation clearance and \$275,000 for a detailed ground survey.

"We are seeking funding from the next Australian government for an Aboriginal heritage impact assessment, an impact study of the area's natural and wilderness values and a business case to quantify the economic and employment potential of the track," the initial press release stated.

The proponents of the new track hope the proposal will elicit a groundswell of public comment beyond discussion on social media.

In particular, Irons said, if the government receives enough correspondence on the matter, the project has a much better chance of going ahead.

"Never forget the power of a letter," he said. "Each one an MP receives is documented, and if they receive enough then they can't possibly ignore them. Write to Tasmanian politicians and tell them of your excited for this proposal – and the fact you're visit if it goes ahead."



Bob Brown's green living

As an exclusive to *Wild* readers, Bob Brown presents his vision for the new track proposal and the reasons why it's needed

THE TRANS TARKINE TRACK

There have been years of speculation about a walking track through the Tarkine wilds in northwest Tasmania. In 2015 our foundation commissioned track expert Martin Hawes to establish a route through the Tarkine rainforest from just south of Burnie to the old mining village of Corinna which, these days, is a little resort beside the wide and reflective Pieman River. This study was funded by public donations and attended, for Martin, by quite a lot of bush-bashing, shin-skipping, solo nights under the stars and discovery!

Martin's completed track route was made public in June, supported by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, tourism operators and environment groups. It is an audacious proposal. His estimate for the high-grade track is \$20 million, including ten raised-platform camping sites with composting toilets. Besides the nation's largest temperate rainforest, the 100 kilometres Trans Tarkine Track will traverse Mount Bertha, buttongrass moorlands, tall eucalypt forests, the Norfolk Range and, for two days, the wild west coastline of the Tarkine, ending with a cruise up the Pieman River to the comforts of Corinna.

I never thought I would get behind a new track through wilderness but I have watched in horror (and spent 11 days in jail for getting in the way of) the rapid erosion of the Tarkine by mining (95 percent has been under mineral exploration licenses), logging (there are 150 coupes set for clearfelling) and off-road vehicles (can you believe that the

Tasmanian and federal ministers for the environment are jointly appealing the Federal Court decision to keep closed the off-road tracks gouging through the Tarkine's coastal dunes and Aboriginal heritage?).

To go to the Tarkine is to want to save it. So the more people who get to experience its boundless spiritual uplift the better. The Trans Tarkine Track, longer than either the Overland Track or the South Coast Track, has the potential to bring more settled, long-term business benefits to the economically strapped and high-unemployment region of the northwest Tasmania than the ecological vandalism of the failing resource extraction industries. The spin-off for local service industries will be big and the potential for the Aboriginal community, whose trained rangers would be best placed to guide visitors across the Tarkine, is real and attractive.

But there is quite a way to go for the Trans Tarkine Track. The next steps include studies of that business potential and of the potential impacts on Aboriginal and natural (including wilderness) heritage values. Martin Hawes estimates the cost of the track at near \$20 million and while this is chicken feed compared to the subsidies that have routinely gone to Tasmania's logging industry it will test the vision of both the federal and state governments.

In a nutshell, this is an exciting anthropomorphic plan which could be a key to saving the pristine ecosystems and rare wildlife which help make the Tarkine one of the world's most ecologically intact yet

unprotected regions.

For more information, please go to www.bobbrown.org.au/trans_tarkine_track. If you are intending to visit the Tarkine before the Trans Tarkine Track becomes a reality you will find dozens of shorter alternatives in our guidebook *Tarkine Trails*, which is available for purchase online at bobbrown.org.au or in selected bookstores and outdoor stores around Tasmania and Melbourne.



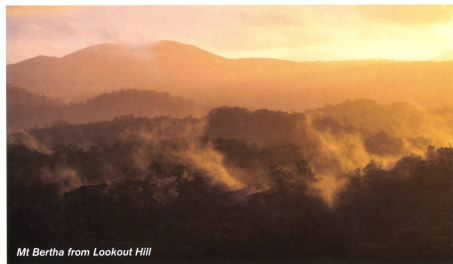
www.bobbrown.org.au




www.facebook.com/Boh.Brown.Foundation

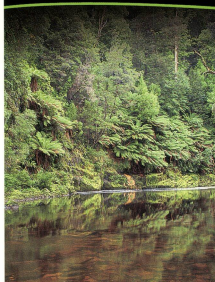


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Mt Bertha from Lookout Hill



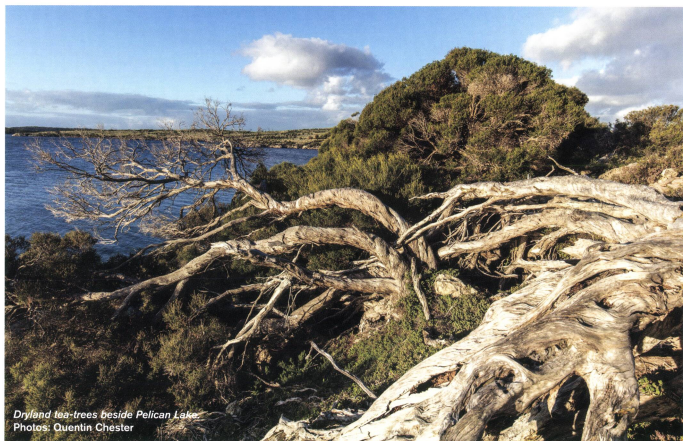


Step back in time and experience an ancient landscape

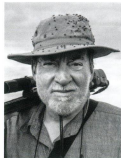
IMAGE CREDIT: ROB BLAKERS

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Dryland tea-trees beside Pelican Lake
Photos: Quentin Chester



Lagoon crossing

A paddle across an estuarine lagoon on Kangaroo Island sets *Quentin Chester* momentarily off course as he considers the case for climate denialism

The kayak is bobbing in the shallows. It's that precarious moment when you ditch the security of travelling upright and drop into a tiny vessel as skittish as an ice cube on a wet tiled floor. A few shuffles, a nervous stagger and finally my bum's planted on the seat. The good news is there's a paddle to hang on to. Once those blades are out there ready to brace, kayaking regains its sanity. Even more so after a few digs at the water deliver a burst of forward momentum.

On the rippling expanse of Pelican Lagoon, a little movement is a welcome thing. You can get marooned here, hunkered at the edge. The floaty spaces drag you in. There's no clear line to the terrain here, no one body of water to fathom. Rather, these 20 square kilometres of estuarine shallows form two main

lagoons and a horde of subsidiary bays, headlands and sand spits.

The lagoon has been goading me for years. It's always on show as you traverse Kangaroo Island's main east-west road. Fleeting glances through the windscreen of open water, tiny islets and twisted old paperbarks blasted by the wind. As visitor attractions go, the place barely rates. Too much shabby, low-lying land. Plus a crusty limestone rim that's mostly inaccessible. It's hardly glossy brochure fare.

However, get in close, you begin to size up what's going on. In recent years I have been handed a few month-long stints here minding a friend's house that sits alone at the water's edge. The view is mostly sea and sky. There's also a fast-growing sprawl of mallee and sheoak our friends planted a few years ago nearby. Parked on the

verandah it's easy to slip into a wide-screen daze.

Over time the rhythms of the place take hold. Without realising it, you're reading the trail of clouds and the shape of the wind on the water. The lagoon is tidal and when the water's up there's a slapping chorus of waves that smack under the limestone overhangs. Conversely, at low water, the exposed shoreline terraces are noisy with feeding oystercatchers and lapwings.

And whatever the sea is doing there's the constant presence of Pacific gulls. Ever watchful, they sail to and fro along the water's edge. A pair regularly perches above us on the roof of the house, announcing their presence with chuckling squawks before setting off again on another patrol. I've taken to following

*A white-bellied sea eagle
floating high above the water*

their lead and drift out most mornings to walk the cusp between land and water.

There's no big-noting destination to aim for. Instead, this dawdling is about facets. You become an accidental forager. On calm days when skirting the shore in soft, pre-dawn light every passing bird or ripple on the water is magnified into a sign. You can be mindlessly gazing at reflections or a billowing cloud when, seemingly out of nowhere, a sea eagle soars overhead or a pelican glides in to make splashy feet-first landing just a few metres away.

In fact, I have lost count of the times on these early strolls when I've been jolted from my doze by kangaroos launching out of the shrubbery or a pair of dolphins suddenly breaking through the dark, glassy water. Such incursions have the effect of a prompt, like a screen alert. It's a memo from your browser with an instruction to press on.

Down through the weeks of waking and walking this has become the essence of the place. Going with the roll. Being provoked by the scatty act of shuffling along the headlands and bays. Finding wined paperbarks and mobs of cormorants. Crunching along the coarse shell beaches. Studying everything from driftwood and skeletons, to eagle rays hovering through the shallows where bare rock terraces are covered with sea grapes.

In all this the only missing dimension has been the open water, the heart of the lagoon. Hence the kayak. Paddling into a

You can be mindlessly gazing at reflections or a billowing cloud when, seemingly out of nowhere, a sea eagle soars overhead or a pelican glides in to make splashy feet-first landing just a few metres away.

gentle ruffle of breeze from the north is no great fuss. Waves are lapping the hull, the air is refreshingly cool and within minutes I'm well offshore, working a centre line between Channel Point and Wallaby Point. Dead ahead there's Shag Rock, a small domed island no bigger than a footy field. From the water it's less about the rock than the hill-top covering of boobias and paperbarks.

Like so much of the lagoon's northern side it appears untouched and primeval. Thanks to a donation of land by Sir Mark Mitchell the Pelican Lagoon Conservation Park protects a good swathe of intact scrub. There's hardly ever other boats out here either. Since 1971 the place has been

a marine sanctuary – SA's first – and given the limited water depth it's mostly navigable only by kayak.

So heading north on a brisk autumn morning it's just possible to pander to the idea I'm leaving the world's troubles behind. There's just sea and sky and a middle-aged geezer paddling as free as a gull on the wing. As illusions go it seems innocent enough. And in this age of tipping points it is worth bracing ourselves with whatever moments of consolation are out here for the taking.

However, even in a place as innocuous as the lagoon, the markers of change are hard to ignore. As it happens it's always been one of those spots that invites

It's getting harder by the day to keep our sense of home and place from being swamped by a news feed that's turning crazier by the minute. The thing is, the more I dig away out here in this tiny boat the more I struggle to fend off a world that can't resist playing fast and loose with the facts.

contemplation. Matthew Flinders and his botanist Robert Brown rowed into the lagoons on a quiet Sunday in April 1802. Matthew noted that a couple of the low-slung islands in the eastern branch were pelican breeding sites. He observed a number of birds, both young and old, as well as a scattering of skeletons that suggested the isles had long been 'selected for the closing scene of their existence'. He went on to reflect:

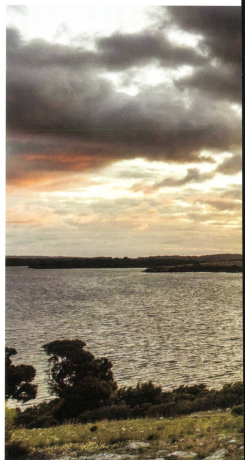
"Certainly none more likely to be free from disturbance of every kind could have been chosen, than these islets in a hidden lagoon of an uninhabited island ... nor can any thing be more consonant to the feelings, if pelicans have any, than to quietly resign their breath, whilst surrounded by their progeny, and in the same spot as they first drew it. Alas for the pelicans! Their golden age is past; but it has much exceeded in duration that of man."

Alas indeed. Thanks to man's impact pelicans have not bred in the lagoon for

more than a century. Meanwhile, with a couple of sweep strokes, I point the kayak to the southern hinterland of the estuary with its mostly blitzed limestone rises. A scattering of bushy bumps and a few relic melaleucas hanging onto the shoreline are mostly all that remain – the original woodland long-since cleared for grazing.

It's getting harder by the day to keep our sense of home and place from being swamped by a news feed that's turning crazier by the minute. The thing is, the more I dig away out here in this tiny boat the more I struggle to fend off a world that can't resist playing fast and loose with the facts.

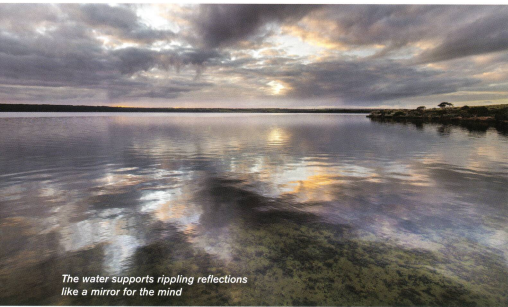
Look, I'm not a climate scientist. In fact I'm not much of anything. But I do know a consensus when I see one. And I'm looking at one right now. I like consensus. If I get sick I'll just reach for the agreed science that tells me how to get better. It's boring I know, but a dose of consensus is the thing that has always kept a lot more people alive a lot longer.



When it came to protecting our kids, did we consult the ex-boyfriend of our neighbour's auntie who read something on a toilet door somewhere? No, we gave our girls the best medical consensus we could find. And we got 'em vaccinated good and proper.

Now, if people want to believe that global warming is silly that's their business. No worries. As Neil deGrasse Tyson says: "the good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it." But if anybody wants to throw away a line that the global understanding about climate change doesn't exist, or that it's all a massive conspiracy, well then we've got a problem. And I've got a question. Why?

If global warming is nothing more than an alarmist beat-up, how can so many people be so stupid? Why are all these corporations, farmers, governments, stockbrokers, popes, artists, and conservationists talking about something that doesn't exist? Why would good-hearted individuals by the billions let themselves be duped? And why, exactly, why would so many self-respecting climate scientists want to agree year after year that the climate's changing much



The water supports rippling reflections like a mirror for the mind



Sunset over Pelican Lagoon

faster because of us? (Please don't tell me it's for the money...)

I'm halfway through this rant in my head when a wind shift kicks in and another reality bites. With the southerly gathering strength it's time to head to the shelter of the shoreline near Wallaby Point. The kayak shudders against the waves and making headway soon takes all my meagre powers. As cold air blasts in over the ridge it gets too much and I turn and beach the kayak on a sand spit a

couple of kilometres from home.

There's no choice but to walk back and wait till another day to collect the kayak. It feels good to be back on land. I slowly follow the weathered limestone edge along the shore, stepping from slabs of rock to coves piled with spongy sea grass. Ahead my friend's re-veg forest beckons and my tempo quickens. The trees have grown much taller since last visiting a couple of years ago. Close by another ridge has been planted out with new

seedlings. I'm on a roll now, among these trees both young and old. There are kangaroos sheltering here and the wind is whooshing through the big sheoaks. Sometimes it's the strangest things that keep you going. W

A contributor since *Wild* issue 3, Quentin Chester is the author of several books about wild places.



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Finding a GHOST

Inger Vandyke hunts for the most enigmatic and elusive wild cat in the world: the snow leopard

When I first saw the Himalayas of Ladakh, I said to my partner, Mark, "How hard can it be? We are looking for a grey cat on reddish stones!" and he just smiled and confidently said, "You wait until you try to find them". It was my first attempt to see and photograph a snow leopard in the wild. Mark had already been to Ladakh to search for them seven months earlier and had only seen them from a distance. He had visited in September. We were there in April. Frustrated by only distant sightings of leopards on two different trips we decided to try for them during the pit of winter at a time when snow leopards are descending into the valleys to search for food and a mate. It is the coldest time of the year in Ladakh.

We landed in Leh at the end of February 2015 and our guide Jigmet Dadul, from the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, met us at the airport. "There's a cat that has been sighted near a village called Temisgam so maybe we should start to look there". The next morning we gathered our small group of four together and started the drive towards a tiny village where an apparently older cat had been prowling the perimeter of the village buildings in search of food. After all, we knew from experience that if we saw this snow leopard, it may be the only one we

would see all trip. We drove out of Leh and into a valley carved deep by the mighty Indus River.

En-route we got a call. The snow leopard at Temisgam had broken into a livestock enclosure and had killed six sheep! The minute we heard, we sped towards the village. When we arrived, I was surprised to see that we were walking right into the middle of the village.

We climbed the steep stairs inside the home of a Ladakhii family and emerged to a tiny, open-air courtyard. There, behind a mud brick wall, was a terrified snow leopard cowering in the corner of an enclosure. The six deceased sheep lay scattered around it. Outside the walls of the enclosure, every available piece of flat land was occupied by curious and excited Ladakhis. Even in Ladakh, the realm of the snow leopard, many local people never see a wild snow leopard in their lifetimes. The sense of agitation and excitement in the air was palpable.

We stood among them and tried to get photographs of the leopard from over the wall. As we watched, the melee that surrounded us and a few local men covered the enclosure with wire mesh to stop the leopard from escaping. Rangers had been called and were on their way. We assumed the villagers had been instructed to contain the cat any way they could.

Meanwhile the cornered snow leopard crept over an inner barrier in the enclosure to hide.

"I want that cat dead!" exclaimed the owner of the sheep, a retired doctor. "It has killed six sheep!" An elder of Temisgam, his reaction made us gasp. It wasn't all that long ago that the crowd would have heeded his calls and the offending leopard would have been stoned to death. But this time the young people of the village reacted by yelling: "You are not going to kill that cat! That cat is the emblem of our mountains!" It was at that point the local police intervened and calmed the assembled people down while they waited for the rangers to arrive.

Assuming the snow leopard was secure, I went with our group to a guesthouse for lunch. We had been watching the drama of the cat unfold for an hour and some of us were getting hungry. Initially, Mark thought he would join us but he forgot to get vital photographs of the dead sheep in the enclosure, and so he returned to the site. He arrived to hear a roar from the assembled crowd, and looked up to see the snow leopard breaking out through a hole in the thatched roof of the sheep pen before bounding off down the hillside through the village. Suddenly the villagers burst into pursuit. Mark joined the throng and ran with the crowd as they tried to

"AND THEN THERE WAS THE SMALL MATTER OF THE SNOW LEOPARD, WHOSE TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS THE VERY STUFF OF HUMAN LONGING. ITS UNCOMPROMISING YELLOW EYES, WIRED INTO THE DEPTHS OF ITS INFATHOMABLE SPIRIT, GAZE OUT FROM THE COVER OF INNUMERABLE EDITIONS. IT IS, I THINK, THE ANIMAL I WOULD MOST LIKE TO BE EATEN BY."
PETER MATTHIESSEN, AUTHOR
OF THE SNOW LEOPARD.

Spotting a snow leopard in freezing conditions is no simple task
Photos: Inger Vandyke and Mark Beaman



Jigmet Dadul handles himself with a healthy dose of patience, consideration and quiet strength

stop the leopard from making an escape. Just when he thought the leopard was free, it came up against a 2.5-metre wire fence that had been kindly donated by a French NGO to keep yaks out of the fields. The villagers then cornered the leopard and it crouched in a ditch. Locating a gap in the crowd, it then sprung up and went to ground in another ditch. It was then that the wildlife officers arrived and the snow leopard turned around with a look of resignation on its face as it was covered in a net and taken away. The officers, well trained to handle leopards in these situations, were very gentle with the leopard and they took it away for a

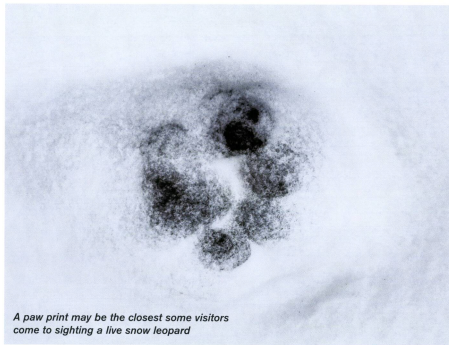
veterinary inspection.

Unsure of the outcome for this animal, we left them to it. In the short time we have been working with snow leopards in Ladakh, we have seen young Ladakhi people completely alter their mind-set when it comes to dealing with the big cats. Ten to 20 years ago, a snow leopard caught in this situation would have been killed. Outraged by the killing, authorities decided that cats who had preyed on livestock should be relocated to another area, a move which may have endangered the animal due to so little being known about the way they hold down territories. Now, as a new surge in snow leopard

tourism eclipses Ladakh, young people are becoming more passionate about their conservation and through the careful guidance of the Indian Snow Leopard Conservancy, the region is becoming one of the easiest places in the world to see a one in the wild.

That ease should not be underestimated, however. The search to find wild snow leopards is still strenuous, difficult and there is only a very small guarantee that you will actually see one. We were lucky. It was my second visit to Ladakh to see snow leopards, Mark's third and we had a client with us who had searched for them over two trips spanning forty days in the Hunza region of northern Pakistan.

"Game over," I thought to myself as we walked away. Day one of our trip and we had already found a leopard. It was the start of our 2015 expedition with British company Wild Images and we got lucky. Extremely lucky. Adrenaline charged through our veins at the sight of our first leopard, but a startled and frightened leopard in captivity wasn't really what we were searching for. What we really hoped to see was a truly wild snow leopard, roaming through its spectacular, yet harsh domain. Temisgam proved to be a soft



A paw print may be the closest some visitors come to sighting a live snow leopard

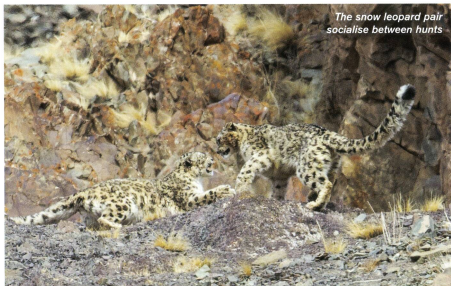


entry into a seventeen day expedition that would see us camped out in -25°C , without showers, getting frost burned faces and busted up fingers as we scrambled around scree slopes from dawn to dusk every day searching for a cat that we may or may not see.

In the days that followed, we widened our search of the area around Temisgam by exploring a nearby valley on foot. Crossing an icy stream and trekking through fresh snow we found a fresh snow leopard kill of a local mountain sheep, or urial, at the bottom of a slope. We stayed with the carcass until dusk hoping the leopard would return to what remained. No leopard.

The following day we hiked to the top of a nearby pass and searched. In the last two kilometres the snow was almost thigh deep in places. Brightly coloured prayer flags fluttered above our heads as we stood scanning from the top of the pass. Some of our Ladakhi friends edged near steep cliffs to get a better look. We found fresh pugmarks of a snow leopard but no leopard.

Satisfied that we had done all we could to find snow leopards around Temisgam, we decided to move to another camp



The snow leopard pair socialise between hunts

where we had heard leopards were being seen. Within a few hours we arrived at the trailhead of a spectacular valley and surveyed the white world in front of us. The white water river of the valley had completely frozen over and recent snow had wiped out any signs of a trail. Luckily, our camp hands had gone before us so we retraced their path over the ice and eventually saw our tiny row of tents

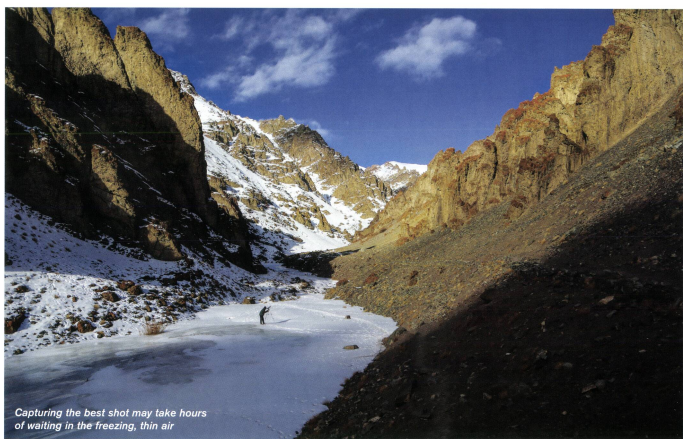
erected on a low promontory overlooking the valley. This was to be our home for the next 10 days and we arrived just in time to enjoy a warm tea with a light lunch before our first foray deep into the valley searching for leopards. Beneath the ruins of an ancient fortress we set up a watch point where we could see almost the entire span of the valley. Again, the first afternoon proved fruitless. No leopards.

The next morning at 4.30am we heard them. Snow leopards don't have the roaring call one would imagine of a wild cat. They have a yowl that sometimes sounds like an ace tennis player on a serve. It is ancient, primal and echoes through valleys, often seeming louder than it actually is. Jigmet quietly walked around our tents in the darkness whispering, "That's them, there are two". Roused from our many layered bedding and finding whatever warm clothes we could to put on, we scrambled out of the tents and watched silently in the darkness. We listened and couldn't hear them, we searched and never saw them. As day broke we decided to get breakfast and search the area where we thought the calls had come from. It was fruitless. They sounded so close. Where on earth were they? Frustrated we returned to our camp for lunch on a stunning blue-sky day.

As we packed up to head off on our afternoon watch, we stopped to look at a small herd of bharal, or blue sheep, mincing their way down the icy river in search of food. They seemed wary and on edge. They were looking up a nearby scree slope and then it happened. A series of high-pitched warning calls pierced the mountain air. The bharal alarm calls led us to them and suddenly our cook spotted them within 300 metres of our camp; two wild snow leopards were taking a siesta



The remains of a kill indicate we're within snow leopard hunting territory



Capturing the best shot may take hours of waiting in the freezing, thin air

on a nearby scree slope! We froze, frightened that any sudden movements might scare them off. Slowly we set up a watch area and we sat in the snow quietly. Feeling thirsty I went to get a litre bottle of water. After taking a few sips I rested the water in the snow beside me. Within an hour it was frozen solid. Although the sun was shining we were watching in conditions that were well below zero. The snow leopards slept for most of the afternoon. It was only when they began mating that we recognised which of the pair was male and which was female.

In the ensuing days we saw the pair several times. Once we were lucky enough to watch them play fighting on a ledge and then another time we saw the female cat courting a male in a rocky lair, high above us. Nightly inspections of our photographs revealed we were communing with three wild leopards. The female was alternating between the older male cat we first saw her with, and a younger male with different markings. She was very rough with both of them, not allowing either to mate with her until she was ready. We watched her injure the older cat's face with deep, bloody scratches and once we found the younger male limping and worried that he may not

have been able to walk well. Not all of our searches for them were successful, but the encounters we did enjoy were mesmerising.

It was sightings and weather that determined the amount of hours we spent in the field. We did get the occasional break of good weather but they were countered with treks through heavy snow falls, icy river crossings where we could hear water rushing beneath our feet, scrambles up steep rock and rocky scree slopes dotted with ice.

On a day when the sun shone brightly, a greater-than-usual number of blizzards interrupted the trek to our search area. We edged our way slowly past them and continued up the valley.

One of our Ladakhi guides decided to press on ahead of us and search the valley terminus for leopards. He came walking back to tell us that a cat was on its way down the valley. We searched for a place to sit and watch.



A pika keeps a beady eye out for predators

Wedge into the rocks and snow, we sat observing an old male snow leopard walking on his own directly towards us. Looking at his markings we realised he was the older male cat the female leopard had been courting. I think he may have seen us and worried about our presence so he moved further up the slope to sleep in a patch of long grass and shrubs. We sat and watched him for nearly six hours. Sitting is the hardest part of the search for snow leopards. If you really want to see a wild snow leopard then you must sit still, sometimes in temperatures around -10°C, for hours on end. Sudden movements can send them running for the hills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In recent years the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust has worked hard to change the attitude of people living across Ladakh towards Snow Leopards. Once highly persecuted across the region, the conservancy has developed a multi-pronged approach in conjunction with the people of Ladakh to form one of most comprehensive conservation programs involving a wild cat anywhere in the world.



snowleopardindia.org

British company Wild Images runs annual trips during the height of the Snow Leopard season to search for wild snow leopards in Ladakh. Run in close consultation with the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, their trips are the most comprehensive operating in the region. Not only do their guests undertake searches alongside expert spotters and guides, they also learn more about the challenges the Snow Leopard Conservancy faces with protecting the leopards of Ladakh.



wildimages-phototours.com

One of our guests couldn't bear the cold any longer and left as quietly as he could. The rest of us stayed behind feigning hypothermia, watching as the bharal edged towards the leopard, completely unaware that their main predator was lurking only metres away. The leopard finally saw them. Prey. He crept out of his hiding place and edged down the slope. Realising he may be seen, he worked his way back up the slope and around a large pinnacle of stone, before creeping down the other side. He found a rock to hide behind and waited. The bharal grazed their way closer and closer. Our group was tense to the point you could slice the air between us. When the bharal reached the leopard's ideal spot, he bolted out of his hiding place. The speed at which he attacked was thrilling. He leapt through the air towards a running female bharal and missed. It was over in less than ten seconds and we watched this cat, with his natural expression of disappointment, wander down the valley, scenting his way past rocks, washing and then finally disappearing over a nearby ridge.

We stood there shaking and bewildered. We had just witnessed an act that only a handful of people in the world have ever witnessed. I sat down on a slope, hoping that my images of that hunt were in focus. Our group crowded behind me. They were perfect. The freezing wait in the snow for nearly six hours was worth it, and I cried.

The search for snow leopards in the wild is rarely this lucky. Even with the magnificent efforts of the Indian Snow Leopard Conservancy, who have turned Ladakh into one of the best locations in the world for seeing wild snow leopards, many visitors return without seeing one or they may only get distant views. Finding them requires a combination of persistence, agility, as well as strength to withstand bitter cold, patience and a lot of luck.

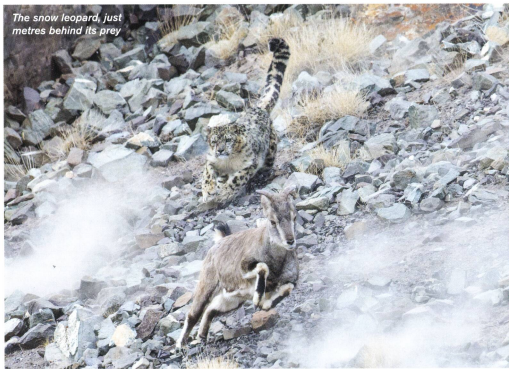
Walking out of our camp on the journey back to Leh, it seemed to me that nature rarely offers easy or reasonable trade offs. She is content to teach us hard lessons from animals like snow leopards: that the greatest encounters come at the end of the greatest feats of endurance; that all life comes from death. We watched another herd of bharal blithely grazing on the nearby hillsides on our walk out. Somewhere in those mountains that old cat was watching, doubtless thinking – as we all must – where it will find its next meal. **W**

Inger Vanduyke is a wildlife photographer and expedition leader routinely visiting up to 16 countries per year. The first female photographer to work professionally on Heard Island, Inger is also an international fellow of the Explorer's Club, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and board member of the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association.



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The snow leopard, just metres behind its prey



Trek to the *Savage Mountain*

Having long-dreamt of a K2 expedition from the Chinese side,
Jim Lindsay waited until he was nearly 70 before taking it on



I've been obsessed with K2, the world's second highest mountain, for over 20 years. Many years ago I read the legendary British mountaineer Eric Shipton's book, *Blank on the Map*, an account of his mountain journeys in western China. In 1996, while living in Pakistan, I trekked to the K2 base camp. Since then, I dreamed of trekking to the K2 base camp from the Chinese side. The Chinese side of K2 is remote, difficult of access and to my mind, almost unreachable. Fewer than 100 people a year make this trek. Now, approaching 70 years of age, I thought the Chinese side of K2 was out of range, until an experience two years ago in Xinjiang, western China. I was hiking on the lower slopes of 7546 metre Mount Muztagh Ata. The ice-clad flanks loomed above me as I climbed up icy runnels on the glacier, which dropped down from the snow-covered summit. Across the valley I could see Mount Kongur, which at 7719 metres, made an impressive backdrop to Karakul Lake glistening turquoise blue far below in the afternoon light.

I was exhilarated. I felt strong and realised that at 68 years of age I was still fit enough to fulfil my longstanding desire to trek to the Chinese base of the second highest mountain in the world, 8611-metre K2. I found a Chinese travel agency that could organise such a trek.

Two friends from Canberra, Marja and Micki – both in their 60s – showed interest. Would they still be interested once they knew the rigours of such a trek? Their recent walking experience was limited to walks in the Canberra hills. Once they began arduous training walks around Canberra, I realised

they were serious. Another Canberra resident,

Paul, a fit 50 year old with considerable hiking experience joined us.

Once the trek was definite I began to face my own doubts. Was I strong enough to do such a tough hike? What if one of us broke a leg, fell into the river, or became seriously ill? The remoteness of the trek was daunting. Even if we could manage to contact anyone, the Chinese authorities have no rescue facility for the K2 region. The only option would be a five-day ride on one of the pack camels to the nearest village.

I arrived in Kashgar in late August, 2014, three weeks before my fellow trekkers. This far-western area of China is more Central Asian than Chinese, with a fascinating mix of dress, language and culture. The Uighur inhabitants are predominantly Muslim and speak a language related to Turkish. On our first evening together in Kashgar we dined at an elaborately decorated restaurant with delicious Uighur food.

The next morning we travelled to Karakul Lake, which at an altitude of 3500 metres was a good location to acclimatise. Micki and Paul adapted well to the altitude. I was worried about Marja, who was having trouble sleeping and struggled on the hikes we made in the area. To my relief by the third day, Marja was feeling stronger.

We returned to Kashgar where we met our guide Akbar, our cook Abdul and a friend of Keyoum's, Nijat. We had agreed that Nijat, a computer science professor, could join our trek to take photographs. The following morning we set off in two

vehicles for Ilik, the village at the trailhead. We had expected a typical central Asian village of flat roofs, mud walls and narrow alleys. Instead when we got to Ilik we found a small village with newly built identical red-roofed, concrete block houses, where the local people had been rehoused. The single deserted street was lit by powerful solar lamps as we drove in at dusk.

The following morning two cameleers loaded our gear onto six camels. These two-humped beasts with long eyelashes and thick coats may look very attractive, but can be dangerous with a nasty kick and bite.

Our trek began with easy walking along a wide ledge high above a river. Snow capped mountains, 6000 metres or so in height towered over us. The sun was hot and we were sweating. The path then cut an intricate route through the high conglomerate cliff as it descended to the river below. We camped that evening among rocks at the confluence of two rivers, which bubbled and swirled over grey granite boulders.

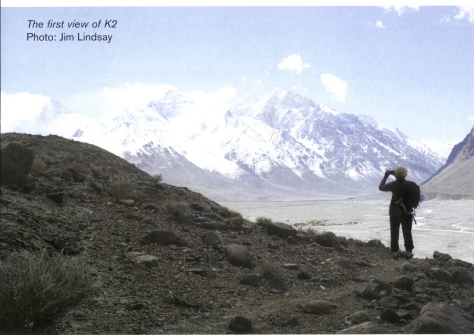
Our first challenge for the following morning was to cross one of the rivers. As we dipped our toes in, we froze. It was beyond cold. With boots strung around our necks and pants rolled up above our knees, we joined hands two by two and ventured out into the river, very carefully. We made our first river crossing safely.

The track became narrower, sometimes becoming a series of stepping-stones leading upstream with the river squeezed against the cliffs defining the valley's sides. Thirty minutes later we came to a rickety wooden bridge. The river at this point turned into a gushing, diving waterfall spilling out of a narrow gash in the rock. Once over the bridge the path climbed high up the flank of a mountain to avoid the impassable gorge. A few flakes of snow began to fall. None of us were dressed for the snowstorm that was about to envelope us. The previous day had been so hot that we had left our warm clothes with the camels, which were now far behind.

Soon we were engulfed in a roaring wind with sleet and then snow almost blinding us as we struggled over huge boulders and scrambled across scree. Akbar had told us that we would be camping near a cluster of mud huts, the last outpost of the summer herders. Heads down, we tramped on until finally reaching the huts. By this time we were exceedingly cold.

Inside one of the huts, we huddled around the fire and a herdsman made us some most welcome tea. We struggled to erect our tents in the appalling conditions.

The first view of K2
Photo: Jim Lindsay



The altitude at 4100 metres was clearly affecting us.

The next morning we began our crossing of the Aghil Pass (4810 metres). The climb seemed interminable and soft snow impeded our progress. All of us continued to feel the effects of our increasing altitude.

I assured Micki and Marja that we would camp lower down on the banks of the Shaksgam River where they would find relief from their altitude sickness. Privately I was worried. None of my colleagues had high altitude experience and I couldn't be sure how well they would cope. We rested near a small lake just before the summit. The clouds lifted and the sun shone brightly. At the far end of the lake the unmistakable fresh tracks of a large cat crossed our path. I took photographs. Later I realised that the tracks must have been made by a rare and endangered snow leopard.

The Aghil Pass marked the point where we were entering an uninhabited wilderness. At the top of the pass we had a clear view of the upper Shaksgam River valley. The 8000 metre peaks of Gasherbrum I and II were visible in the distance. The previous year, four German hikers, travelling without a guide, had gone up this valley towards the Gasherbrum peaks. They split into two pairs, taking different routes and planning to meet again in a few days. The first pair waited several days at the rendezvous point, but the second pair never returned. Despite an extensive search coordinated by the German Embassy in Beijing, no hint of the missing pair's fate has ever been discovered.

The path during our descent at times meant clambering through fields of boulders. As we neared the Shaksgam River we found our way blocked by a seemingly continuous 100-metre-tall cliff, stretching far into the distance. We followed the edge of the cliff in the opposite direction to where we would camp Akbar pointed to an almost invisible steep fissure that a small stream had carved in the conglomerate pebbles. We clambered down to the river flats. The camels had taken a longer route to avoid the cliff, but were by now well ahead of us. Once on the river flats, we assumed we would be at our campsite within

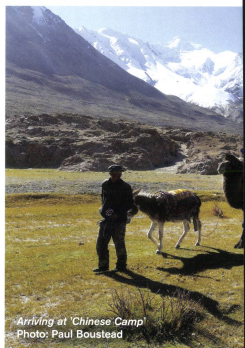
minutes, but instead it was another hour of exhausting slog over rocky terrain. It was dusk when we reached the camp after a strenuous 11-hour day.

Our camp was in a deep gorge. We awoke to a clear sky, mountains towering over us on either side. Our first crossing of the Shaksgam River was not difficult. We held hands and crossed the fast flowing and knee-deep water in pairs. Akbar told us that this day would be easier than the Aghil Pass, so we dawdled, enjoying the sunshine and the views. When Akbar caught up with us after helping pack camp, he told us to get a move on. We again straggled into camp just before dark.

On the fifth day of our trek we climbed over a rocky spur that separated the Shaksgam River from the river flowing from the flanks of K2. Rounding a bend, suddenly there was K2 in front of us. I stood there stunned. Even though the mountain was 25 kilometres away, K2 dominated everything, towering high above the nearby mountains, a giant white tooth of rock and ice. For me, this view of K2 justified the entire trip. I felt privileged to be one of the relatively few trekkers to see the northern side of the world's second highest mountain.

In the afternoon we reached the base camp, known as Chinese Camp, a grassy area interspersed with dwarf willow trees a metre or so high. Our eyes adjusted to a different beauty after days of endless greys, browns and reds of rock and stone. A clear stream wandered through the camp. Unfortunately there is no view of K2 from Chinese Camp.

Our plan was to spend two additional nights at what is known as Italian Camp, higher up on the flanks of the K2 glacier itself. Camels could not go that far. The cameleers, Akbar and Ahmed would have to carry most of our equipment and we four would carry modest loads. A party of French trekkers who had been several days in the area told us that there were excellent views of K2 to be had at a certain vantage point three hours walk from Chinese Camp and that there was no particular advantage in going any further up the valley. Given the complexities of going to Italian Camp,



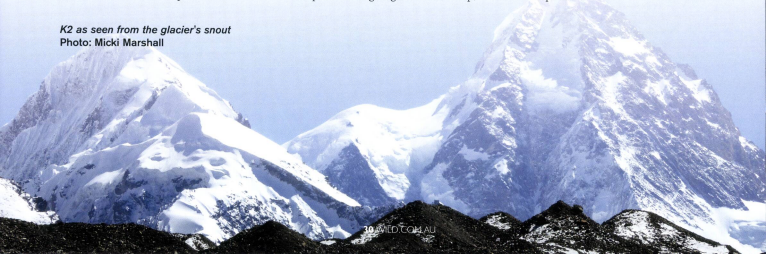
Arriving at 'Chinese Camp'
Photo: Paul Boustead

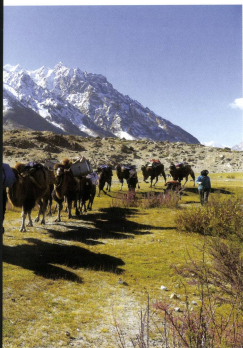
Micki, Marja and I decided to take the French advice. Paul chose to have the experience of camping higher.

After a day's rest at Chinese Camp we set off up the valley towards K2 on a track that climbed high above the river. At the vantage point described by the French we stopped for lunch. Paul, Akbar and the two cameleers continued on towards the higher camp. Micki, with Abdul accompanying her, decided to go on to the snout of the glacier that descended from K2. Marja and I lazed in the sunshine enjoyed the excellent views of a prominent mountain that we took to be K2.

Micki returned some hours later with harrowing stories of descending a cliff studded with loose rocks to reach the snout of the glacier. It was only after hearing her enthusiastic account of dramatic views of K2 did Marja and I realise that we had been completely fooled. We had been looking at a much smaller (albeit similarly shaped) mountain. The real K2 had been obscured from our view by an intervening ridge. We returned to Chinese Camp with no time for Marja and I to go onwards to a K2 viewpoint.

K2 as seen from the glacier's snout
Photo: Micki Marshall





The following evening we saw torchlights high on the ridge above. After a couple of hours Paul and the rest of the party arrived, having decided to spend only one night at

get on a camel and hurry back to Ilik before a serious infection set in. I knew that infection from an untreated camel bite could be fatal. To our shock, instead of returning immediately, the leader of the group announced that he was going to spend the day hiking towards K2 to take photos.

The return to the trailhead at Ilik offered yet more drama. A crossing of the Shaksam River proved downright frightening. We were crossing at a point where the river ran swifter and deeper than where we had crossed before. In midstream I lost my footing and leaned heavily on Micki, nearly sending both of us into the water. A sense of panic gripped me. I knew that if I fell both of us would be swept downstream with serious consequences. Adrenaline pumped. I steadied myself and reached safety. Marja also got into difficulties, very nearly falling into the ice-cold rushing river, but after a few anxious moments she and Nijat reached the bank safely. We were all soaked. Luckily, this drama occurred only a few minutes from our campsite where the staff had thoughtfully already put up the tents. We dived into our tents to put on warm clothes. Mentally I felt exhausted, but said nothing

do. I knew the return crossing of Aghil Pass would be the toughest part of the hike. I had been haunted by an unspoken fear ever since crossing the Aghil Pass on our inward journey. We had met a group of German trekkers struggling up the path. They had almost reached the summit, but they looked ready to drop from exhaustion. If these fit-looking, younger trekkers found the pass difficult, I wondered what hope had I? Climbing up the pass, my walking pace was slower than the others, so Micki carried my daypack. When we reached the summit of Aghil Pass, we exchanged high fives. The toughest part of the trek was over.

Another snowstorm the next day did not faze us as we were on the home stretch. Two days later, a lot fitter than we had been at the beginning, we scampered up the path that climbed the conglomerate cliffs out of the river valley. Our vehicles awaited us at the top.

We anticipated the return to Kashgar with great excitement, looking forward to the hot showers and another meal in the ornate Uighur restaurant with its evocative smell of spices.

Having returned to Kashgar, we toasted to

GETTING TO K2'S CHINESE CAMP

The best time of year to make the trek is late August to early October.

Contact: Keyoum Mohamed, Kashgar Mountaineering Adventures (Keyoum speaks excellent English)

Expedition cost: Around US\$3,800 per person all inclusive from Kashgar Airfare Sydney-Kashgar return about US\$1,000



www.kashgaralpine.com



The rocky wilderness with camels far below
Photo: Jim Lindsay

Italian Camp. Reaching the site of Italian Camp had been difficult because the previous year a massive rockslide had obliterated the trail. Paul enjoyed spectacular views of K2 at Italian Camp, however the condition of the rock and ice meant that he could not go higher up the valley.

The next morning, four Japanese trekkers visited our camp. One of the trekkers had knelt beside one of the "cute" camels for a photo and received a deep bite just above her knee. The Japanese trekkers asked if we had a satellite phone to call for help. We explained that even if we had a phone it would be useless as there were no rescue facilities. Akbar and I urged the woman to

of my feelings to the others. We had many more river crossings ahead of us.

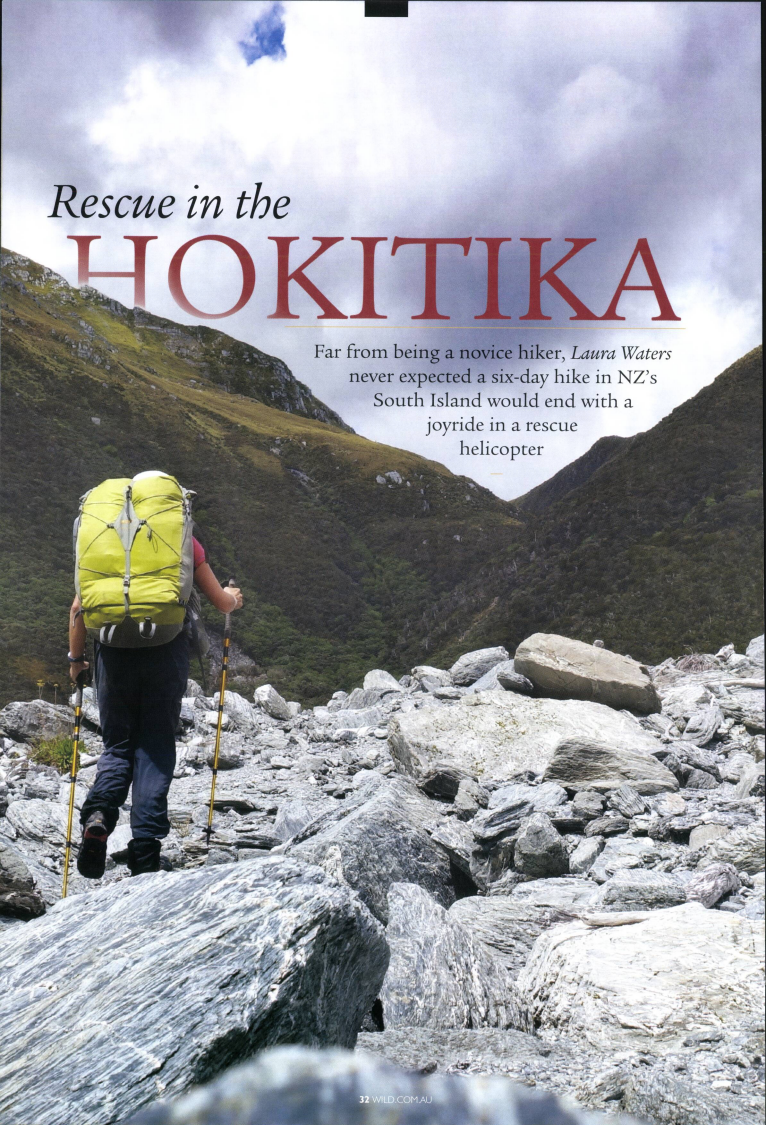
On the third day of our return journey, Akbar urged us on because we would camp about one third of the way up the Aghil Pass and not where we had camped previously. The disadvantage of this campsite was that there was no water and only a small amount could be brought up by donkey from the river below. We camped at a little flat spot among huge boulders and towering cliffs.

We woke the next morning to snow-covered tents and it continued snowing while we ate breakfast. We were all concerned about what the weather might

a challenging hike successfully completed. Inwardly, I felt relief. I had dispelled my own doubts about my physical fitness and also lay to rest my fears that I might have tempted two mountaineering novices on an enterprise that was tougher and rougher than they had bargained for.

Most importantly, we had each gained the summit of a personal challenge, making the experience all the more worthwhile. **W**

Jim Lindsay has been passionate about mountains all his life. He has a special enthusiasm for trekking and climbing in areas off the beaten track, including in Chile, Colombia, Pakistan, West Papua, Kenya and Somalia. Jim retired from the Australian Foreign Service in 2000.

A hiker with a large yellow backpack and trekking poles is walking up a rocky mountain trail. The hiker is seen from behind, wearing dark pants and a red shirt. The trail is composed of large, grey, layered rocks. In the background, there are steep, grassy mountains under a cloudy sky.

Rescue in the

HOKITIKA

Far from being a novice hiker, *Laura Waters* never expected a six-day hike in NZ's South Island would end with a joyride in a rescue helicopter

While beautiful, the Hokitika is filled with treacherous terrain
 Photos: Laura Waters

I'd been stranded in a hut in the Hokitika Valley for three days with a line from a song constantly gate crashing my thoughts. 'Push the button,' the lyrics taunted me. I ignored them. I didn't want to push it.

The button in question was the one on my Rescue Me personal locator beacon. 'Use only during situation of grave and imminent danger,' it said on the tiny handheld unit. Strictly speaking, I was okay. I'd dislocated my shoulder walking in three days earlier but had managed to get it back in place. The 'imminent danger' had passed, though I then found myself stuck in the middle of some of the most challenging terrain I'd ever encountered and there was no way my partially functioning arms were going to be able to haul me and my pack back out again.

It was probably never going to be an easy hike. Challenging trails are common in New Zealand. I'd already walked well over 3000 kilometres of them in the previous 18 months – many of them solo – so I wasn't expecting a picnic, but I had little idea just how tough things would get when I set out for a six-day hike on

the South Island's wild west coast.

The trail notes sounded fairly innocuous, describing a route that traversed rugged river valleys carved by the Toaroa, Hokitika and Lower Whitcombe Rivers, and crossing two alpine saddles en route – wild and beautiful, just how I like it.

THE INCIDENT

It all started well enough. The Hokitika is a region of spectacular beauty. Dense, bottle green forest clads the steeply descending mountains, the odd waterfall spouting from their sides. Down in the valleys, the water is clear and unfathomably blue as it cascades through the sweeping schist gorges that the region is famous for.

I set out following a river cluttered with giant boulders, some nearly twice my height and in places I clambered over them to stay on course. They were a decent challenge to negotiate though the track notes made no mention of them.

On the second day the trail followed the river higher into the mountains, dipping in and out of the forest to avoid gorge walls. It's steep terrain, seriously

steep. The track deteriorated into a rough 'staircase' of moss covered tree roots and rocks and I climbed it, digging my fingers into the dirt and clutching onto branches to help haul myself up. It was here that things went wrong.

The toe of one boot slipped and I fell, bouncing down the rocky slope on my stomach and dislocating my shoulder in the process. Eventually I came to a halt, flooded with shock and a mild panic. Time was of the essence – relocation needed to be quick before swelling made the job practically impossible. Gently I tugged at the wrist, wiggling the arm in different directions until, mercifully, the shoulder dropped back into place.

It wasn't the first time I'd done it. Over the years I'd suffered the misfortune a number of times, usually, but not always, getting it back in place without medical assistance. Consequently, I didn't at first consider the incident to be a deal breaker. It was an unlucky fall and my legs worked fine. I just needed to be careful with one arm – no reaching upwards and pulling, and no reaching sideways or behind. And besides, I'd already covered some difficult terrain that I didn't fancy tackling again. I

expected the trail would soon settle down and I could simply walk it.

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

The trail didn't improve. Not long after, I sat the top of a five-metre flank of sloping rock looking down at the next trail marker below – a tricky obstacle, but at least I was going down it rather than up. Just one challenge to get past and then I can resume on the trail, I thought. I turned to face the rock and carefully lowered myself down using the tree roots that lay against it like abseiling ropes, stretching out my legs for small toe holds and keeping my right arm tucked in close against my body.

Further on, a landslide had washed away the path. I inched my way across a sizeable slip towards the next trail marker only to realise that the lip I needed to crest at the far side was chest high. Somehow I managed to haul myself over it. Half an hour later the trail broke away yet again in a slick of loose grey dirt falling to the raging river far below. I skirted the steep land above it, clutching onto armfuls of bush and branches to rejoin the trail on the other side.

I kept expecting 'normal' trail to return but it didn't. The area had been hit by landslides, turning an already challenging trail into a very dangerous one, but by then I was already too far in. Retracing my steps was not an option.

Five hours later, I reached Top Toaroa Hut and dropped my pack just as a helicopter flew over the valley so low I could see the pilot's face. It had been buzzing overhead numerous times in the previous few days, most likely doing some trail works for the Department of Conservation. Suddenly I had an overwhelming urge to be in it and fly out of there. The terrain was too gnarly and I wasn't in any fit state to tackle it, but by the time my shock-addled brain had thought through the extent of my predicament the helicopter was gone.

Late in the day, two Kiwi hikers joined me, weary from covering the same route. One of them had hiked the area years earlier and he painted a grim picture of the way ahead. "There are a few tough bits in the next section – big steps you need to pull yourself up. And then when you reach the river on the other side in a few days time there's a bit of boulder scrambling. It's not real easy to see where the trail goes either." His face was doubtful. "I've got a PLB," he offered.

I had my own, but I'd been resisting activating it, cognisant of the many people who would be mobilised into action to search for me, and my family at home who



Track markers lead up sheer, slippery rock faces

would worry. The situation didn't seem worthy of rallying the troops. I was okay, not in any immediate danger; I was simply stranded. Also, I felt it would look bad on my report card. I would be using up valuable 'rescue points' on something that to me didn't seem like a genuine disaster.

Were it any normal trail, I could simply walk out, but tramping here was a full body sport. I was caught between many rocks and hard places. If I rested for a few days and then attempted to continue on I would start to run out of food at the tail end of my planned route. Not only that, but I could get myself in more trouble and end up in a place where help couldn't reach me.

I finally decided I should not attempt to walk out. If the helicopter flew overhead again in the following day or two, I would flag it down, allowing me an exit without unduly worrying anyone.

THE RESCUE

And so I waited, sitting with my pack in a clearing near the hut on the edge of the river. The imposing dark mountains that trapped me appeared and disappeared in the sun, fog and drizzle. I read, slept, and





It's a sudden relief to be skimming over the mountains

wandered around, ever vigilant for the sound of a distant engine. A pair of ducks kept me company, squawking in the still air and all the while my shoulder ached.

I found the waiting game a struggle. It seemed like giving up. My usual mode of operation was to harden up and push on, but continuing in the difficult terrain with one sore and loose shoulder didn't seem

like good risk management. Why wait for the situation to potentially turn catastrophic before I asked for help?

Three days passed. The skies were silent.

At the end of my third day another pair of hikers arrived at the hut, one of whom was an off duty search and rescue officer.

"Can you walk out?" he asked me.

I conceded I couldn't.

"Well then you're in imminent danger. You're going to run out of food," he pointed out calmly. "Press the button."

I ventured outside and found a clear space open to the sky. It seemed surreal to finally pull out the tiny retractable aerial, flip open the hard safety cover and press the button on this most serious piece of equipment that I had always carried, yet never expected to use. A little light started flashing, confirming that a beacon was sending a message up to a satellite and back down to the emergency services.

Drizzle and mist hung over the mountains. I didn't know if they would be able to fly under the conditions, but after two hours the heavy thrum of a helicopter filled the valley and within moments it had landed in the clearing next to the hut. I rushed to scramble a few belongings and get my boots on while my new buddies went out to greet the man in a red jumpsuit and white helmet who had ducked out of the helicopter. A brisk exchange of information ensued while I was bundled inside and strapped in and then the pilot cranked up the engine and lifted off, rising above the valleys and mountains. Through windows beaded with rain I gazed down at the wild terrain I'd walked, hugely relieved to be skimming above it rather than slogging through it on foot.

I apologised and thanked my three rescuers in equal measure but they were

unconcerned. "Oh we don't mind coming out for a spin. Most calls we get aren't too serious. We'd rather get you now." Before I got myself in any more trouble, was the implication. I finally released any guilt I felt on the matter.

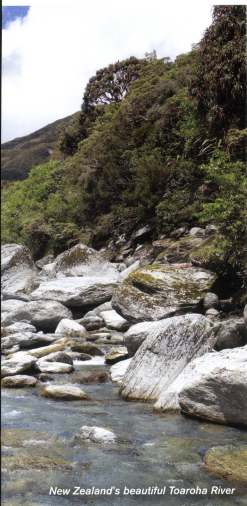
It only took around fifteen minutes to whisk me from the bleak and inhospitable mountains to the sunny seaside town of Greymouth, landing directly in the hospital grounds. A doctor x-rayed my shoulder and gave me the all clear. I was free to go.

It was not how I'd expected my hike in the Hokitika to unfold. An event-free hike would have been the preferable choice, but sometimes things go wrong. It was an interesting experience to sit alone for three days, analysing my movements and observing my emotions and thought processes. Looking back I don't think I could have chosen any alternative options. Sometimes being 'strong' means something different to what you're used to and asking for help is the wisest course of action. **W**

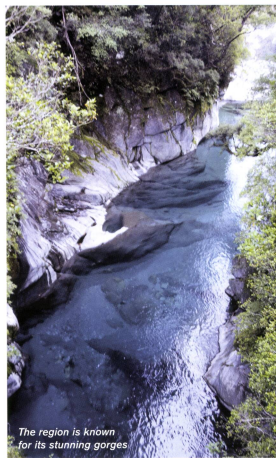
Laura Waters has sold scuba holidays, worked for a dive operator and held various roles at ski resorts in the US and Australia. Now, however, she's left the corporate world entirely, trading it in for hiking, writing and a life of adventure.



www.wildimages-phototours



New Zealand's beautiful Toaroha River



The region is known for its stunning gorges



"I WOULD NEVER DESCRIBE MYSELF AS AN ARTIST COMPARED TO SOME OF THE GREAT BIRD ARTISTS, AND I WOULD CERTAINLY AVOID THE TERM 'TWITCHER'. IT IS NICE TO SEE A NEW BIRD, BUT I WOULD MUCH RATHER INVEST MY TIME IN STUDYING RARE BIRDS THAT MAY BE IN TROUBLE AS OPPOSED TO CHASING A GLIMPSE OF A SPECIES THAT ACCIDENTALLY TURNED UP ON OUR SHORES."

The art of flight

As a celebrated amateur field ornithologist, *Lloyd Nielsen* observes, paints and describes Australia's native avian species with zeal



Metallic starlings (*Aplonis metallica*) by Lloyd Nielsen

For Lloyd Nielsen, studying a bird means observing as many aspects of its behaviour as possible – and rendering those details in prose as well as paint. Not only has this practice gained him recognition as a noteworthy ornithologist, his work has potentially saved species from extinction. And, in 2014, Lloyd received the BirdLife Australia John Hobbs Medal, awarded for his outstanding amateur contributions to Australasian ornithology.

"I spent my early days on a family farm in the very pretty Goomburra Valley at the foot of the Great Dividing Range in southeast Queensland," he recounts. "It was a great area for birds. I recorded over 220 species in the three years before we left when I was 18."

The excitement associated with finding new birds begun at a young age for Lloyd. He recalls being gifted a copy of Neville Cayley's *What Bird is That?* for his sixth birthday: "From then I was hooked". Many subsequent hours were spent roaming the bush, applying the knowledge the book offered him in

being able to identify new species.

From that point, Lloyd's love of bird watching grew to the point of publishing his own guides on the species. However, the artistic side of his abilities apparently didn't come to fruition until much later.

"I had written a small guide to the birds of Lamington National Park in southern Queensland while I was working as a birding guide for O'Reilly's Rainforest Resort around 1990. I was looking for an artist to do the illustrations, but my first choice and old friend, Peter Slater, was unavailable."

It was at that stage that some bright spark asked Lloyd why he didn't try his own hand at the illustrations. He says that, although he'd "never attempted to draw anything, let alone a bird" before, he decided to give it a shot.

"I tried drawing a few and surprised myself when they actually looked like

birds! The early drawings were fairly amateurish, but I was able to get the general form right and the results developed as I went on."

According to Lloyd, one of the hardest things for a traditional illustrator or capture is the 'jizz' of a given bird species – a term used to describe a combination of posture, shape, silhouette and even behavior. "It's an advantage I have over artists who are not birders," he explains.

"After many years of watching birds closely, I know their actions, manner and shape intimately. To depict this is very important for identification, but most field guides depict a bird's profile over and over again without any consideration of their jizz. It becomes rather monotonous after a while."

Monotony may be one way of describing the amount of time one spends looking for and watching Australia's

various bird species, but for those that get bitten by the birding bug, it's anything but. Lloyd is very much aware that the pursuit isn't for everyone, having spent a commensurate amount of time observing the behaviour of those people who spend their time around bird watchers.

"One night, when I was much younger, I was visiting an older birdman who lived about 150 kilometres from my home. His wife had prepared a great meal and their kids had had their meal earlier, so the three of us were sitting around a small table eating dinner.

"At that stage I was single and the conversation eventually turned towards the topic of marriage. After a while, my birdman friend looked up blankly, staring ahead and said, 'I wonder when I got married?'. He definitely said 'I' and not 'we'. He then continued: 'I remember. It was three days after I saw my first powerful owl and that was on 10th of June, 1960, so it must have been on the 13th of June'. At that stage, I drew my legs back under my seat for I was sure he was going to get a kick in the legs. However, his wife did not bat an eyelid. But the next morning, the man's wife got her own back. Someone called at the house and his wife introduced me. 'Meet Lloyd Nielsen', she said with the added quip: 'And he is only starting to go mad.'"

For those who do love birds and bird watching, there's plenty to be gained. Beyond his obvious enjoyment and the work Lloyd has committed in order to produce quality reference material, his work has also helped protect the birds and their ecosystems as well.

Lloyd has been working on a particular species, the buff-breasted button-quail, for the past 25 years. Living in just a small area of Cape York, this bird is now the only remaining avian species not to have been photographed or have its call recorded. For many years it was considered equally as elusive as the fabled night parrot, but even that species has been recorded in both formats, making the buff-breasted button-quail the least-known bird in the country. "I've managed to see just 22 in my 25 years of searching," admits Lloyd, with hard-won gravitas.

Lloyd's work on the buff-breasted button-quail, as well as the red goshawk, helped prevent the clearing of large swathes of forest on the Cape York Peninsula, of which 32,000 hectares were due to be removed to make way for sorghum production (which would have been used to feed cattle). Through his

fieldwork, conservation organisations were able to establish the presence of these endangered bird species and stop the clearing from going ahead.

A scientific paper presenting Lloyd's work on the buff-breasted button-quail is currently in the final stages of drafting, and may well be published by the end of this year.

However, when asked what his favourite species of bird is, Lloyd is quick to respond in a surprising manner. Despite all of his years trying to spot buff-breasted button-quail, his personal taste runs towards a much more visible – and deadly – species: the peregrine falcon.

"The peregrine falcon's speed and agility in the air is incredible," he explains.



"It lives on birds it takes on the wing and to see a falcon stoop when taking prey is breathtaking. It makes the prey species appear as if it's stationary.

"I've seen a peregrine falcon come in from behind a pacific black duck – a bird twice its size – before turning on its back mid flight in order to slice the duck's belly from tail to neck with one talon. The duck fell out of the air; it was dead before it hit the ground."

The excitement doesn't begin and end with observing bird behaviour either, as Lloyd has also shared in plenty of adventures – and some mishaps – while travelling the country. In particular, Lloyd

recalls a number of occasions where, if not for keeping a close eye on the weather and being prepared to strike camp at a moment's notice, he would have been cut off from civilisation by flooded rivers for weeks at a time. As a result, Lloyd says he now pays careful attention to weather reports at regular intervals, as well as keeping one eye on the horizon.

Following the release of his small field guide for Lamington National Park, Lloyd decided he should create a similar resource for Queensland's Wet Tropics, the first version of which was published by Gerard Industries (Adelaide) in the mid 90s. "This sold out fairly quickly, but in the meantime Gerard Industries was taken over by a multinational company that subsequently closed the publishing arm," Lloyd tells us. A reprint would have to wait.

Eventually making a start on an updated version of his Wet Tropics field guide in 2010, Lloyd spent the next five years on the project before choosing to self-publish the book. The result is his latest publication, the nearly 400-page *Birds of The Wet Tropics of Queensland & Great Barrier Reef & Where to Find Them*, which was published in Cairns in December, 2016.

The combination of his publications and ongoing observation of birds such as the buff-breasted button-quail allow Lloyd to promote conservation in his own way, while also inspiring others to consider how they also may be involved. In particular, he is passionate about halting the continued clearing of native vegetation, as well as the impacts of invasive grass species in tropical areas, both of which have significantly negative outcomes for native birds. "For example, hymenachne, which was introduced as a wetland pasture grass, has come to be regarded as a particularly noxious weed and is fast destroying wetlands across tropical Australia. Giant rat-tail is taking over many areas of native grasses and Hammill grass has already infested huge areas, smothering out smaller plants," he says.

"While there's little we can do to combat these pest grasses, increasing awareness of these problems will hopefully help conserve what remains and perhaps one day solutions will be found." Until such a time, the critical work of amateur scientists like Lloyd Nielsen will continue to be pivotal to the ongoing protection of Australia's wilderness areas. **W**



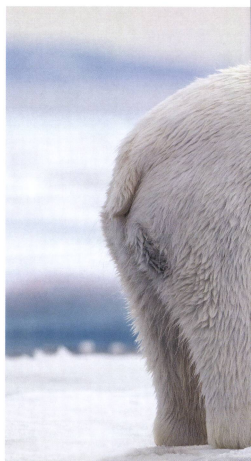
www.birdingaustralia.com.au





ICE BEARS OF *SVALBARD*

Joshua Holko is not afraid to spend days in the cold, as evidenced by his superb collection of polar bear shots



Previous page: "Polar Bear Reflections", female polar bear at the edge of the permanent pack ice at 80.5° north of Svalbard stares down into her reflection.

Clockwise from left:

"Stalking the Land", female polar bear stalks across the frozen Templefjord in Svalbard in winter in search of seals; "Breaking the Ice", testing for weak points in the ice, a female polar bear tries to break through the frozen fjord ice to get to the seals underneath; "Red Faced", polar bear dines on a fresh seal kill at 81.5° north of Svalbard under the midnight sun; "Protecting the Kill", female polar bear guards a fresh bearded seal kill on the frozen temple ford in Svalbard in winter at polar sunset.

Living in Melbourne, Joshua Holko is a full time professional nature photographer specialising in polar photography. A fully accredited, AIPP Master of Photography and member of the Australian Institute of Professional Photographers (AIPP), he has won countless awards including being named the 2015 Global Arctic photographer of the Year. Joshua is officially represented by Philip Kulpa and the Source Photographica Gallery in Australia and Aspen USA.

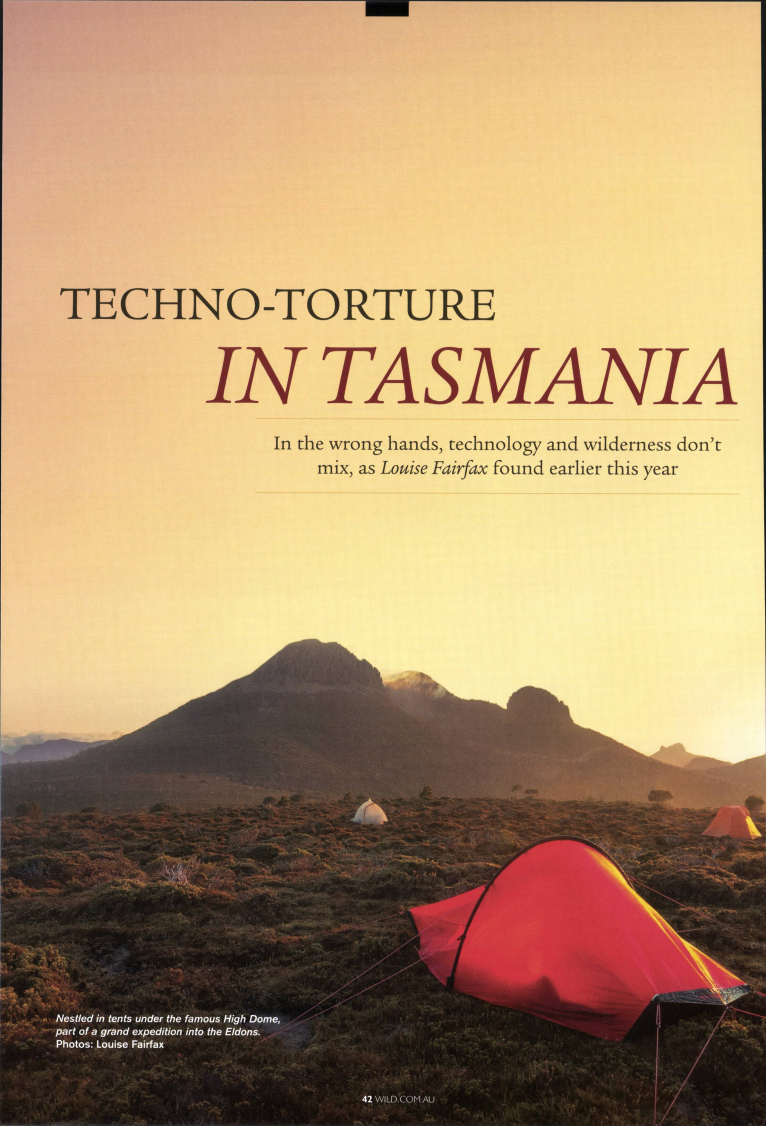


www.jholko.com



TECHNO-TORTURE *IN TASMANIA*

In the wrong hands, technology and wilderness don't mix, as *Louise Fairfax* found earlier this year



Nestled in tents under the famous High Dome, part of a grand expedition into the Eldons.
Photos: Louise Fairfax

"Yes, you're OK. Just one more metre to the left," our leader calls.

We progress another hundred paces and he stops and checks again. "Now we need to be about five metres to the right," comes the command. We are in thick bush, but a few mere metres to our left is an alluring patch of scrub-free button grass.

"Can't we walk there?" we plead.

"This is the way HG (Herr Gott) went, so I think we should stay on his route," comes his reply. On we trudge with a certain unwillingness in our steps, our chests turned to the prickling, unyielding wall of scrub in reluctant compliance, submitting to the unwritten rules of this game that give the coordinator power of veto.

More halts. More minute corrections to our trajectory so that we can stick better than glue to HG's supposed footsteps. Pity about the inherent 15-25 metres inaccuracy in a GPS reading. We follow our Biblical script for the day, written as a line on our coordinator's screen. At one point, however, the scrub is so extremely thick we are allowed to use our brains and try to find a bit of a lead through it. This we do eagerly, but are quickly called back to attention:

"I've found a lead and am exactly on his track. Follow me," called our coordinator with glee. We follow him, his nose in his screen, but we are looking at the land and noting a certain repetition of scenery. We call out to him that we have now done a complete circle and are travelling out backwards to the start. Is this honestly what he intends? A compass does not appear to be desired equipment for these garmin aficionados.

We stop while he checks again and marvels over this latest item of information. I look ahead and see a cliff wall ahead of us, so joke with the others while we wait: "Now he's going to tell us that HG went up those cliffs." We all snigger.

"Yes, hmm. Now I have it sorted. Yes, we go straight ahead here," he says, pointing unequivocally at the cliffs of my joke. Up we obediently scramble, pulling and tugging, risking falls on the narrow ledges, to stand at last atop this kind of rocky knoll perched above a sea of button grass. We walk ten or maybe twenty paces until the purple line tells us we must now climb back down again – a different set of cliffs, of course. We've come to the far end of our knoll, and have to climb down. From now on, every single rocky knoll we came to was joked about: "Bet you HG climbed this one!" We began to get hysterical with stifled laughter.

Now, the Abels book (one of the general

founts of wisdom on such matters) advises that to climb the mountain of our intent, one heads left at a 90-degree angle to our current direction of travel, to a saddle. We point out the saddle, but are told that HG didn't go that way. Well, this is to be expected, but when we watch our actual mountain passing us by to our left, we become rather sad, as we had all really rather wanted to climb it.

"Did HG climb Rufus instead?" asks one of our number.

"Guess so," we mourn. Pity. Wrong mountain. Sadly we wave goodbye to the

mountain we'd signed up for and head for Rufus. Pity about the rules of this game.

Perhaps if I had a better opinion of the true navigational skills of HG I mightn't have been so untrusting, but the day I met him, I had waited over 50 minutes for him and the others to turn up to our meeting spot. When they arrived they marvelled: "How did you get here?"

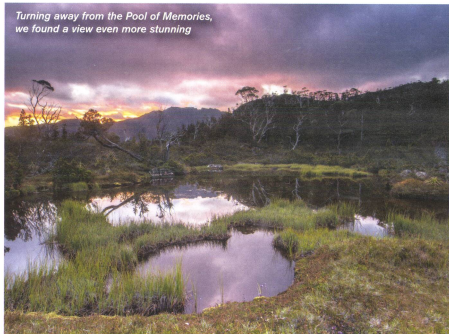
"I read the map. How did you not get here?"

"Oh, we relied on HG's memory and he got it wrong," they chuckled without apology.



14yo Cam Bush checks out the scenery before the real difficult climbing begins

Turning away from the Pool of Memories, we found a view even more stunning



But there was another rat I began to smell, quite apart from this general distrust of a source that had reduced credibility, which prompted my next question: "Exactly when did HG do this fabulous route?" I called to the front.

"1994" came the answer, said without the slightest touch of irony or hint that the leader thought this a hilarious response; on the contrary, he sounded almost victorious in his delivery of the number which utterly ignores the fact that the forest might have changed in 21 years.

"But noble leader, they hadn't invented gps in 1994. We're following to the letter of the law HG's roughly remembered route from 21 years ago. It's a pencil line on a map. What scale was he using when he marked it down?" As you see, I had decided that subtlety and irony were no longer working and had switched to being blunt. I have neglected to add that all of this scrub pushing and bashing around was being done in light rain. The saturated bushes had now wet us. I turned to look the others in the eye to see their response to my quip. Rolled eyes greet me. I didn't have to ask if they'd got all the implications.

Unfortunately, my question did not change the tactics for the trip, although the hilarity level up the back did increase. The leader was a little flustered though. Perhaps he at last suspected dissent amongst the ranks.

Anyway, we got to the top of the first of our mountains eventually.

I had been let off my leash a few contours from the end, and so relished in the freedom of being allowed to progress not according to script. I paid for my freedom with a freezing wait, lengthened

by the fact that our leader could not possibly progress from the summit until he'd eliminated about twenty waypoints on his screen. At the time, I could not see the point of this, as incorrect waypoints, when you look at a map, are manifestly not the

way to go, and are not on the route, so are therefore (using logic) ignored. What I didn't realise yet was that our leader did not have what I would call a map, so could not use map features to determine whether a waypoint was sensible or not. We were at last given the go ahead to progress to the tarn we had been staring at for quite a while now. It lay not far away, a gentle saunter down the hill.

"Just a minute," however, he calls us back to consult his screen once more. "The tarn is 400 metres in that direction," he informs us, pointing at the tarn that everyone else could see.

DAY TWO

The general methodology of day one was repeated with no amendments made from the experiences of day one. On we went in tiny spurts and starts, stopping regularly to be corrected with regard to our mini-direction of travel. Predictably, the batteries in the Garmin ran out, but no problems, there were more to hand.

Yet again, we arrived at a cliff face, but this one was life-threateningly big. I was near hypothermia, so feeling the humour a little less by now. Up we scrambled only to



face a death drop straight ahead.

"Did HG jump off this?" I asked. The drop below was a good thirty metres. Perhaps I had now reached the point where I declared my open mutiny.

"Most puzzling. Most puzzling. It seems so," came the confused response.

What on earth were we to do? Our authority could fly, but we couldn't. How could we possibly navigate our own way to the top of the thing we were now climbing? We only had five utterly competent navigators in our midst, all of whom were mute in the face of the route handed on by HG. I could sense rebellion mounting.

The happy ending is that we were not required to jump in the footsteps of this icon, but were allowed to think and find a route for ourselves. Once found, we of course had to turn back to the holy script, which mysteriously circled our mountain like a wild beast toying with its prey. This didn't disturb me, as this part of the mountain was very beautiful, and I could see that, even if we did these odd circles, we were, unbelievably, going to summit. It was merely a matter of sooner versus later (or, vice versa).

As we neared camp later in the day there were more humorous moments: times when the leader, face in his screen walked straight into a dense thicket while we recalcitrant souls read the environment and evaded it, waiting for him each time out the other side. My best laugh came when he actually walked into a tree.

Being an impatient person, tiring of this game and eager to bring a cold wet day to a close, I strode off to the only reasonable place for the tarn of our campsite to be, given the contours of the ridgeline, and made sure I was neatly out of earshot to avoid being told what I already knew about where the tarn would be. It felt wonderful to be allowed some of the freedom of the wilderness for the five or so minutes it took to get there.

DAY THREE

More of the same, but alas with me now, patience-battery run out, answering back every time I was told, for example, that the saddle I was steering us all to was x meters ahead in a direction that was pointed out to me when I could already see the feature and was happily and purposefully heading for it. Or, that the summit was to my left 200

metres away, when a three year old with eyes could have told you the same thing.

There were endless repetitions of this odd need to inform the person doing the bush bashing for everyone where they were to go when it was unequivocally clear. In frustration, at one stage, I asked to see this screen that was dictating my every move, even when I was being nice and making the path to save the others energy. All I could see was a pathetic line. I was horrified.

"Where is the contour detail?" I asked. I was told the contours were somewhere but not in this spot. This was funny, because my map has contours here, but then, my map is what I call a map.

At the end, our leader, radiant with the success of our mission, announced that not only had we climbed all our mountains, but he also had the whole lot recorded on his GPS.

"Great," said one of the back rebels. "You'll know where to go next time then." W

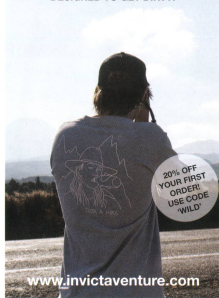
A former academic and Australian representative at athletics, orienteering and triathlon, Louise now cares for her ill husband, combining that role with freelance writing and photography. Wild places are important to her for physical and spiritual reasons. She loves the act of gaining height, as well as sleeping on summits and photographing nature's beauty.

Technology is all well and good, but not when it distracts from the experience



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Don't like it? TAKE A HIKE

You can't always choose who you hike with and sometimes sharing the track with incompatible companions is unavoidable, writes *Mark Daffey*



Neil Fahey
Photos: Neil Fahey

Hikers rest beneath Mount Chaukhi in Georgia's Caucasus Mountains. Sometimes you can't choose whom you hike with, leaving you to put up with the good and the bad.
Photo: Mark Daffey



We were barely a quarter of the way up Mount Feathertop when the rumblings began. I hung back to keep him company, allowing the two young gazelles who accompanied us to bound on ahead. I was struggling a bit myself so it suited me to potter along at the back. I didn't want to blow up too early and it allowed more time for me to take in the scenery and to pace myself so that I'd have the energy to set up camp and make it to the summit that afternoon.

I teased and cajoled him but the grumbling continued. Then a confession blurted out — it was his first hike in more than a decade. Not only that, he estimated it had been equally as long since he'd last exercised.

"Are we nearly there yet?" he complained. "How far to go?"

'My God!' I thought. It's like hiking with my six-year old.

We can't always choose our hiking partners. And even when we do, we may

not know how they're going to respond when they realise they're not physically conditioned to the challenge. Or perhaps we find out too late that they're ill equipped to deal with adversity or sudden weather changes.

In the past I've been shadowed by a needy South African through Cappadocia's heavily eroded valleys, all because he couldn't bare the thought of being left alone in the hostel back in Göreme. I've been forced to spend several weeks in the company of an alcoholic bigot on a hiking expedition in western Tibet. And I clashed with our Ethiopian guide in the Simien Mountains, where we bickered constantly over trifling issues.

Back in 2001, I was invited to join a trekking party that planned to summit Mera Peak in Nepal. By that stage I considered myself to be a reasonably seasoned hiker who, through first-hand experience, had learned about the pitfalls of altitude-related maladies. I'd suffered mild doses of cerebral oedema in Borneo and Kenya and even Nepal itself, so I knew the risk that this 6500-metre mountain posed. And the risk was that it could kill you, especially if you underestimated it. Not everyone in our group seemed to grasp that though.

One fellow, who had barely hiked to the end of his driveway, was intent on using Mera Peak as a steppingstone to higher

Eric Phillips fell out with Peter Hillary during the trek to the South Pole.
Photo: Eric Phillips



grounds. Every conversation with him seemed to be littered with references to climbing into the 'Death Zone' after he'd seen something about it in a television documentary. It mattered little to him that the label had been struck after countless mountaineers – experienced ones – had died while climbing above 8000 metres.

The fact that Mr Death Zone wore leathers and rode a Harley Davidson and had an unpredictable temperament spared him from ridicule, though the mountain wasn't so forgiving. For most of our 30-day expedition, he trudged on slowly at the back of the field, hindered by a mild stomach bug and a lack of fitness that forced him to reflect on his own frailties.

Neil Fahey, writer of the award-winning Bushwalking Blog (www.bushwalkingblog.com.au), remembers his Inca Trail hike in Peru being soured by the company he kept.

"My hiking partner had sore feet, but it was his attitude that was the real problem. I don't think I heard a single positive word come out of his mouth. We were an hour behind the rest of the group on our third day and we didn't arrive at camp until well after dark. I don't think I can remember any other day of hiking that felt as long as that one.

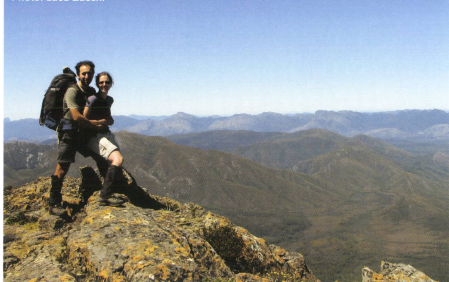
"We completed one more multi-day hike together after that and the experience was similarly awful. While ascending 1200 metres up a steep switchback trail out of a canyon, I got so tired of the whingeing and him hating to stop every few minutes that I decided to physically push him along for some sections of the climb."

Differing fitness levels can often be the cause of delays that lead to friction within a hiking group, especially if all that the laggard contributes to the hike is a poor attitude. Anthony Dunk, author of three bushwalking guides around Sydney and developer of the Handy GPS app, mostly hikes with people of similar ability and experience. Occasionally though, one slips through the net.

On one hike through the Colo Gorge area of Wollemi National Park, west of Sydney, Andrew walked with a friend who had never accompanied him before so he had little idea about how she'd perform. It was clear early on that he was the fitter of the two and she grew concerned about being able to return along the steep trail they'd walked in on. He therefore led her back along a creek bed, following a route he'd found quick and easy on a previous hike.

"It started to get dark well before we had reached the exit point and we had no torches, so I had to leave her and race ahead to find the exit point before visibility

Susan and Luca Zucchi on Mount Eliza in Tasmania.
Photo: Luca Zucchi



faded to nothing. It would have been almost impossible to see without light and we probably would have kept going up the creek bed and got lost.

"I marked the exit by stringing a piece of tape across the creek to act as a marker that we would run into and notice, even in the dark. But when I got back to her, she had hardly progressed.

"I had to help her every step of the way, until we eventually reached my exit tape well after nightfall. We then had a 20-minute walk on the fire trail back to the car, plus a 90-minute drive back to Sydney. It was a tough day."

It was the last time the two walked together.

As Andrew demonstrated, hiking with a girlfriend or wife can be fraught with danger, especially when your abilities are mismatched. So it might sound odd when I say my wife is my ideal hiking companion. We both enjoy the space and freedom that bushwalking allows us and we have similar fitness levels, even if I take longer to find my rhythm. At night she typically does the cooking while I pack away my photography gear or jot down a few notes about the day's trek, and it also helps that she's usually obliging when I ask her to model for the camera above precariously precipitous drops.

Luca Zucchi has always hiked with his wife, Susan. The two of them started with day walks around Katoomba and Blackheath before Susan suggested they shift up a gear. She wanted to venture off-track and eventually persuaded her more conservatively minded husband to take a chance. The more remote trails in Tasmania

beckoned and they were quickly hooked. They found themselves returning there twice a year, attracted by the extremes Tassie threw up at them.

Luca claims Susan initially lacked his fitness but it was her drive and eagerness that drove them towards harder challenges. There was, however, one snag – Luca is afraid of heights. And some of



the routes Susan chose made his stomach churn and his legs turn to jelly.

"It got to the point where we'd go to indoor rock-climbing centres so I could try to feel more comfortable whenever I was out of my comfort zone," he confessed.

As is often the case, having a child curtailed their bushwalking pursuits and Luca says they haven't really hiked much in the past three years. Shane Thompson, on the other hand, is fortunate that his children are too old to want to walk up mountains so weekends for him these days often include scheduling in hiking and camping trips with colleagues from work. During one dull afternoon at their aeronautical factory in Port Melbourne, the conversation steered away from the usual fare of drugs in sport and the Kardashians and moved on to the great outdoors. Before he knew it, Shane had volunteered to organise an overnight hike.

He found several willing participants, some of who were rookies and others who appeared physically unsuited to draining hikes up mountains. But it was only through trial and error that he was able to determine who was best suited to the task.

"On many of the hikes we've done, I have been on the tail end of the group – not that I mind too much, as the peace and quiet of the bush is what I enjoy and I tend

to see more wildlife that way. I find that the younger ones in the group head off like it's a race or to prove to others who is the fittest, only to miss out on an enjoyable walk. And arriving at the campsite, I often find that they missed a lot of interesting spots along the way.

"I find it very annoying when someone in the group doesn't understand the basic rules of the bush too, like washing their dishes away from the creek or leaving the campsite a little better than they found it. It's generally only one or two who don't follow the rules and even then, it's mostly because they don't know or understand what there were doing wrong. And that's because they haven't spent much time in the bush.

"I'll usually offer a quiet comment as to why it's wrong or I bring it up in general conversation around the campfire. They usually learn, but I can be a little selective when sending out emails about trips next time."

And that's the thing about hiking – most of the time, you only get one chance to prove yourself to the rest of the group. Get it wrong and you'll rarely be invited back. **W**

Mark Daffey is a bushwalker, seasoned traveller and professional journalist who is becoming more selective in his walking partners as time goes on.

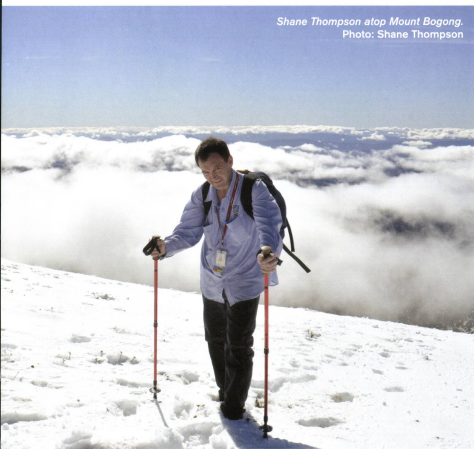
THE IDEAL PARTNER

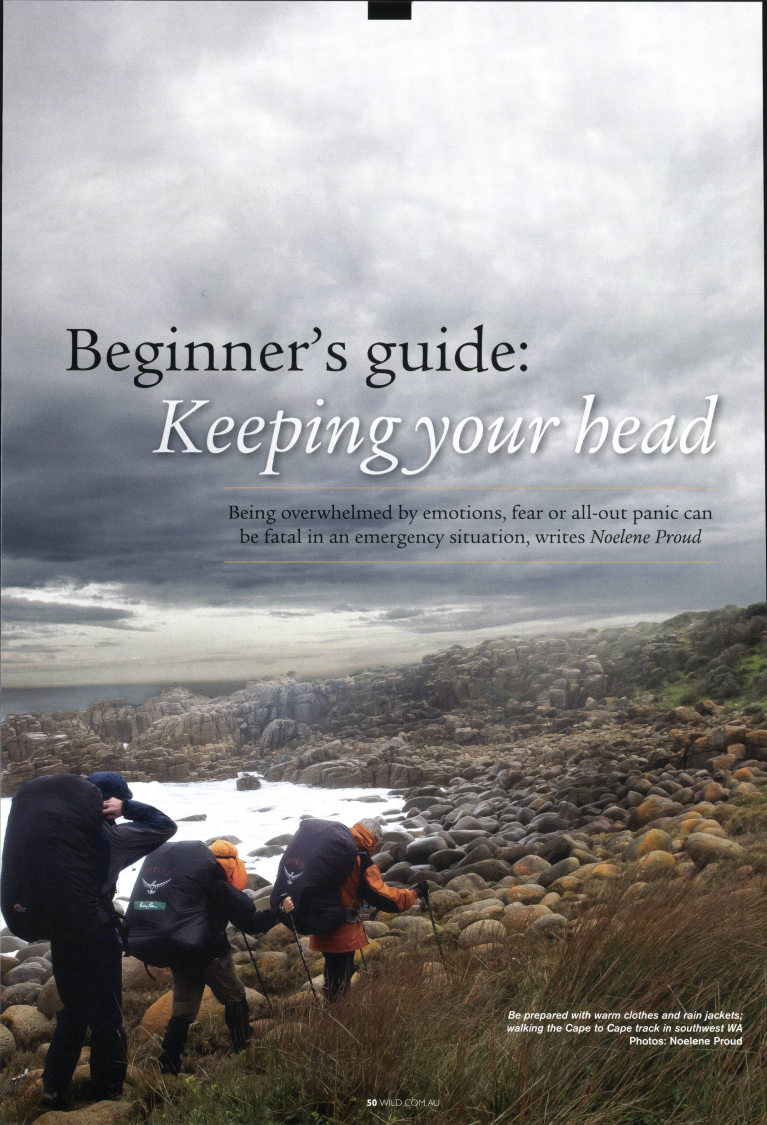
One who knows better than most about spending time with incompatible co-expeditioners is Eric Philips, who famously fell out with Peter Hillary while they and Jon Muir became the first Australians to trek, unsupported, to the South Pole. Philips outlined his issues with Hillary in an honest account about the expedition titled *IceTrek: The Bitter Journey to the South Pole*, and it wasn't until those issues were resolved through lawyers that the book was released.

Philips and Muir later team up again to ski trek from Siberia to the North Pole, and Philips has since guided several other expedition groups to the poles. He has also traversed Greenland, Ellesmere Island, Iceland, Svalbard and Patagonia on skis. When asked what makes a great expedition partner, Philips listed the following points:

1. Takes an active interest in the planning of the expedition, thereby taking ownership of how it progresses and pride in the outcome.
2. Comes to the expedition fit for the task, both mentally and physically.
3. Not everyone joins a trip equal in skill levels so the perfect partner is willing to learn (and implement what they learn) and impart during the expedition.
4. Contributes or takes an active interest in every element of the expedition, from its progress and navigation to team dynamics and camp chores.
5. Has the right balance of personal space. Someone who contributes towards verbal interactions – both operational and social – but respects and enjoys downtime.
6. Consistency. Everyone experiences ups and downs but the best expeditioners are those who are humble about it and can maintain an even keel for the long haul.
7. Doesn't take his or herself too seriously. Has a sense of humour and an ability to cheer people up, as well as be cheered. The Aussie self-deprecating demeanour is particularly suited to demanding expeditions.
8. Has the mental fortitude to push to the limit – physically and mentally – but can recognise the difference between utmost adventure and misadventure.

Shane Thompson atop Mount Bogong.
Photo: Shane Thompson





Beginner's guide: *Keeping your head*

Being overwhelmed by emotions, fear or all-out panic can be fatal in an emergency situation, writes *Noelene Proud*

Be prepared with warm clothes and rain jackets; walking the Cape to Cape track in southwest WA
Photos: Noelene Proud

"Psychology, including fear and loneliness, plays a bigger part in survival than any other factor. It is primarily a mind game," says Mike House, one of Australia's leading survival instructors.

Most walkers prepare physically for a big trip by training and many make contingencies for an emergency incident by packing a personal locator beacon (PLB), sat phone or Spot beacon. Can bushwalkers, however, put preparation and planning into the 'mind game', the mental and emotional reactions in the event of an accident or critical incident?

Mike believes they can. "The first step to mental preparation in the event of a serious incident or situation is to think about the logistics of the expedition, how long are we going for, who have we notified, what are the back up plans. If something happens you have already thought about it and already have a few things in play to fall back on, reducing the shock value of finding yourself deeply in an unanticipated circumstance," says Mike.

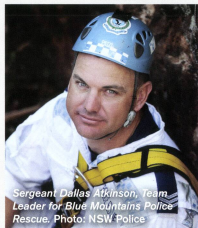
Mike recommends thinking about the likely things that could go wrong, such as losing the track, being lost or disorientated, the occurrence of an unexpected weather event, and how would you deal with these things. "This thought and planning is so important, just the fact you have thought

about it means you are not caught completely off guard," adds Mike.

This practice of thinking about potential risks and responses to them before the adventure starts is followed by mountaineer Andrew Lock. Before heading for a mountain, Andrew undertakes a risk assessment to manage the potential dangers posed by avalanches, weather, altitude and fatigue. He recommends the same process to bushwalkers in dealing with potential hazards. "If you are thorough in your risk assessment and how you plan to cope with potential dramas then you should have the confidence to deal with them when they occur," says Andrew.

"You don't have to sit down with an Excel spreadsheet, although a lot of people do," says Andrew. "You can fairly easily predict the sort of incidents you might have when bushwalking, including medical emergencies, snake bites, storms, getting lost, flooded rivers that make crossing difficult. You can plan for these. A flooded river may be as easy as taking extra days food to stay there and let the river subside. It may be that you can deal with the incident and get around it or you may have to turn around, but as long as you planned for it, the event shouldn't be an significant emotional crisis or hardship."

Without this sort of forethought, Mike



Sergeant Dallas Atkinson, Team Leader for Blue Mountains Police Rescue. Photo: NSW Police

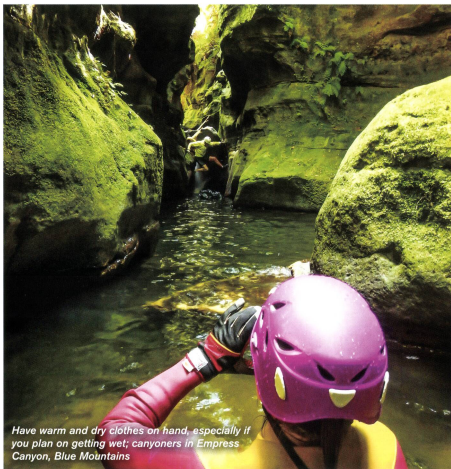
SERGEANT DALLAS ATKINSON IS THE TEAM LEADER FOR BLUE MOUNTAINS POLICE RESCUE

Undertaking about 150 rescues of outdoor adventurers each year, his team is one of the busiest rescue services in Australia.

"Being with the search and rescue authority in the Blue Mountains, I get the luxury of seeing other people's mistakes. Sitting on the outside looking at the chain of events that lead to incidents and the contributing factors, the one thing I cannot stress enough is people going into these areas need to prepare in terms of the right gear and provisions, knowing their route back to front and having emergency plans in mind. They don't have to be formal, just thinking about 'well if the weather turns ugly, where are my escape routes.'"

Dallas's tips for bushwalkers

- Know your route and be prepared by thinking about what you will do if an incident occurs
- Have warm, dry clothes, the ability to light a fire and a way to communicate if no phone reception, even on a day walk
- If you have reliable communication, call the police or national parks authorities and ask for assistance to self-help. Call earlier in the event than later.
- Remain calm and determine what your circumstances are objectively rather than subjectively
- If the point has come where you are thinking you need to call for help, then you probably should
- Activate a PLB in a life-threatening emergency



Have warm and dry clothes on hand, especially if you plan on getting wet; canyoneers in Empress Canyon, Blue Mountains



www.trek.nsw.gov.au

House believes bushwalkers are much more likely to struggle to be logical and calm if an emergency or even life threatening situation occurs. "When a survival situation happens, we will find ourselves at a point of psychological realisation that we are in it, it is likely you are heading straight into

MIKE HOUSE, ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S LEADING SURVIVAL INSTRUCTORS, IS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED SURVIVAL EXPERT, OUTDOORS LEADER AND MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER.

Based in Perth, Mike has been studying the survivalist mind for decades and has personal experience in the area, thanks to a venture on the ocean in a cyclone as well as situations in raging white water. "I have been in three situations where I thought I was seriously facing the imminent end of my life and people often ask if your life flashes before your eyes. In my experience that doesn't happen, there is not enough time, you are pretty much flat out dealing with it in whatever way you can."

Mike's tips for bushwalkers

- If lost, stop and breathe, make a plan, make a fire
- Stave off a reactive state by breathing, stating the emotion and stating intent
- Be in the best possible state to deal with an emergency by always being hydrated, well fed and ahead of the weather
- Stack things in your favour by having some things immediately to hand in your pack that you will want if it all heads south, such as a fire lighting method, a survival kit and windproof, waterproof and warm clothing
- Remember and act on the five priorities of survival: water, warmth, shelter, signals (any method of communication) and food. The priority changes according to circumstance and can also shift during an incident
- Food is nearly always a distant fifth, no one has ever died of starvation in a survival situation that I am aware of. They usually die of exposure or exhaustion of some description
- Exposure in the Australian context usually means dehydration and cold in other parts of the world



www.mikehouse.com.au

reactive space and all those evolutionary mechanisms of flight, fight or freeze activate. Often when we read coronial reports the coroner says what the person did does not make sense, it does not appear rational and the reason for this is it is reactive, it is not thinking, so they have either acted in a way to deal with the situation there and then, going flat out trying to sort it out, that is fight, with flight they are trying to get as far away from it as possible. With 'freeze' they are pretty much immobile. None of these are particularly helpful or useful to someone getting out of the situation," explains Mike.

Sergeant Dallas Atkinson of the Blue Mountains Police Rescue sees the results of fear and panic more than most people. He describes one 'rescue' of a lost hiker on a daywalk who managed to get a triple zero call out despite patchy coverage. "She was quite distressed at the time of the call," says

Dallas. "It was after dark when we finally got to here and she was terrified, hysterical, and of the view we had saved her life because she thought she was going to die out there, that night, when the reality was she would have been perfectly fine, the weather was mild, the sun would have come up and she would have found her way out or we would have found her. She was genuinely distressed beyond belief and totally believed we saved her life when she was only 50 metres off the track. She completely lost it," says Dallas, referring to her mental state rather than her navigation.

Dallas describes a similar rescue involving three young men. On an overnight walk, they activated a PLB at sunset when they believed they were lost, unable to find the track they were following. "We found them camped literally five metres off the track," says Dallas.

Have a good map and know possible escape routes; walking in jarrah forest south of Perth



"I don't want to put people off calling for help," explains Dallas, "I am just illustrating that fear can take over the thought process, especially if it is getting dark."

Mike has some advice to help people that find themselves in an emergency situation, real or perceived, including if they are overwhelmed with fear and on the verge of panic, a dangerous state that shuts down the frontal cortex in our brains so we cannot think in a rational way.

"There are probably three things people can do to help themselves out," says Mike. "The first is slowing our breathing down and putting some rhythm into it, some regularity in terms of how long you breathe in, how long you breathe out. Breathing is the only part of that reactive state that is within our conscious control and by slowing it down and getting it regular, it rapidly gets your heart rate back into an even beat and also slows down your mental patterns," says Mike.

"If you are breathing slowly and steadily you can't be reactive at the same time. Just slowly your breathing down is a fantastically good tool, switch some of that physiological stuff off," adds Mike.

"Secondly, you are having an emotional reaction at that time as well, maybe anger, fear or blame, and we all plenty of those feelings that can come into play if we think we are in deep trouble. We can reduce the chemical impact of an emotion on our system just by stating it out loud, just the fact that you have identified and articulated the emotion, causes particularly cortisol and other stress chemicals to plummet," explains Mike, "So far the circumstances haven't changed at all but we have ourselves a whole heap more under control."

Mike suggests the next thing to do is state out loud what your intention is, giving you a plan of how to deal with the circumstance, decreasing the likelihood of acting in a reactive way.

Giving thought and preparation to how you will deal with a serious incident or life threatening situation before it occurs can be the best way to ensure a reaction that helps you survive. "Well prepared people can still get into trouble, they can still have accidents," says Dallas. "I'm not a psychologist but those that are well prepared to start with and at least have some emergency plans in place are more likely to keep a cool head and make good decisions if it does go pear-shaped." W

Noelene Proud is a regular bushwalker and beginner mountaineer who enjoys sharing the knowledge she gains while in the bush. She is a regular contributor to *Wild*.

ANDREW LOCK, AUSTRALIA'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED HIGH ALTITUDE MOUNTAINEER AND ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE TO SURVIVE A NIGHT IN THE OPEN ABOVE 8000 METRES

Andrew Lock has had his fair share of precarious situations while climbing all fourteen of the world's mountains over 8000 metres, including a very dangerous, solo, unprotected downclimb of the upper reaches of K2. Surviving this, he found himself buried by an avalanche that swept over his tent at 7200 metres on Dhaulagiri in Nepal. Completing pinned down by snow, Andrew resisted the natural response of thrashing around to escape, knowing it would consume precious oxygen. Calmly waiting for his team mates, hoping they were not also buried, to dig him out, he was relieved when they unearthed him after fifteen long minutes. Andrew went on to summit the mountain.

Andrew believes his ability to respond to this incident in an objective way, rather than to panic, was learned. "I think I was lucky to come up through Scouts and a school with an active outdoor club that exposed me to challenges, building in me a level of competence as well as confidence to take on challenges where the outcomes were uncertain, where there were risks and to handle them capably. The extension of this was incidents such as the avalanche where I was sufficiently in control of my emotions that I could objectively assess the situation and decide that it was more dangerous to me to panic than to control my oxygen use. That feeling and ability definitely came from exposure to threats and risks over a number of years and learning to deal with those risks. The avalanche was a higher level of threat but I had already handled some significant threats, including the K2 down climb," says Andrew.

An even tougher challenge was to come on Andrew's ascent of Broad Peak in Pakistan. Climbing solo, the ascent taking hours longer than anticipated due to very deep snow, Andrew was exhausted on the descent from the summit and faced a very risky downclimb or making a bivouac at 8000 metres.

"The decision was very objective," says Andrew, "to make the bivouac and not try and downclimb the cliff face, because my hands were so frozen I didn't think I could, so it was the lesser of two evils to stay up there but I did it with my eyes wide open, I knew I was subjecting myself to significant risk of cerebral or pulmonary oedema, frostbite, and that I had to consciously keep myself awake and force myself to survive the night, by working my fingers and toes, staying conscious, and making rational assessments of my condition. It was a very tough night but I just addressed it objectively and knew that I had to break it down into chunks, typical of any significant goal, and surviving that night was a significant goal. You break it into achievable chunks and celebrate the success of reaching each stage and then moving onto the next one." By breaking the night into one hour chunks and keeping a positive mindset, Andrew finally saw the sky lighten and felt the sun's warming rays. Starting the climb down at sunrise, it would be 8pm before he staggered into his base camp and could finally rest and rehydrate.

A professional inspirational and motivational speaker, presenting predominantly on leadership and teamwork, Andrew is the author of *Summit 8,000: Life and Death with Australia's Greatest Mountaineer*.

Andrew's tips for bushwalkers

- Undertake a risk analysis of possible emergency events
- Fear helps to identify dangers and to not be blasé but learn to manage your fear; do this by developing skills slowly, starting with easier objectives, so that the confidence and competence to overcome challenges is built



andrew-lock.com



Australian plant specialists

Michele Kohout explores some adaptations that are key to the survival of plants in harsh places

An example of a feldmark-type habitat with an example of the hardy little flowers that can be found therein. Photos and illustration: Michele Kohout



A bit like people, plants have different strategies for surviving a tough world: there are 'specialists' and 'jacks of all trades'. I think the specialists are the most interesting because these plants can have some quirky and bizarre methods for dealing with hardship and these can pique our interest and can be a great talking point or distraction while out bush. The plant world abounds in a variety of leaf shapes, sizes and textures, a plethora of different types of hairs (who'd have thought), leaves that move, drop off, stems that can be reduced or enlarged, just to name a few! Paradoxically, these specialisations for hardship in stressful environments actually promote diversity and lead to these unique places being rich in different plants.

Specialists are, as the name suggests, capable of dealing with very specific and

particular conditions. They have evolved (often in situ and we can call these endemic) to deal with particular stresses of the environment, and these might include the climate (temperature, rainfall, light, solar energy), topography, aspect, soil and geology. These attributes rarely act individually, but combine to create a very specific and complex suite of conditions that a plant must be able to cope with in order to not only survive, but thrive.

In general, stress means that productivity (the ability to turn sunlight into plant material) is low and the methods for coping with this can be similar for different stresses, a form of multi-tasking. Plants in harsh places often have a slow growth rate, long-lived parts as well as being evergreen. They are there for the hard yards – consider stunted ancient pencil pines that are found in the Tasmanian

highlands or cypresses in our arid interior. Perhaps this is why I have such a soft spot for gnarled, twisted stunted trees, in any environment. I can't help but be impressed by their tenacity to live.

Plants have a varied toolbox of features that enable them to deal with harsh environments, and these may be visible but sometimes are not so obvious. Plant size and morphology, leaf shape, size, thickness and texture are the first things we might notice. Other adaptations that may not be obvious may include rate of growth, time of year when most growth or flowering occurs. Plants may be adapted to conditions by actually avoiding them by being dormant as a plant or as a seed. Safety in numbers can also be a way of coping with stress, especially as a seedling. Growing in a clump may provide shelter from wind,

protection from soil disturbance and predators.

In alpine environments the main stress is low temperature, but desiccation, strong wind and intense solar radiation also occur. Growth and flowering is limited to a brief summer period. During winter, plants can be protected by an insulating blanket of snow, and some, like the alpine marsh marigold, start flowering under the snow in order to get a head start. On west-facing ridges, where snow is blown away in winter and the stony surface bakes in summer sun, specialists tough it out and form one of Australia's most restricted (i.e. covering the smallest area) communities: feldmark. Plants here are extremely slow growing – one centimetre of stem length per year.

Small evergreen plants, mainly perennial herbs and shrubs, are common in alpine areas, hunkering down to protect themselves. Cushion plants, as the name suggests, form spongy mounds where the fragile new growth is protected deep inside, where the temperature and humidity is substantially higher than the surrounding environment. Shrubs like the mountain plum-pine grow flat against rocks in order to harness the energy absorbed by rocks. Some plants have small, grey, hirsute leaves to cope with the cold. Others have small, stiff leaves to prevent drying out.

Trees don't occur in the true alpine zone because they are unable to gain enough energy to survive on the highest peaks. This abrupt delineation of trees forms the 'treeline', and in Australia this is between 1750-1800 metres. The exception to this is Australia's only winter-deciduous tree, *Nothofagus gunnii*, which is able to survive on all but the highest summits of Tasmanian mountains because it avoids some of the hardships of winter (low energy gain, freezing conditions) by shedding its leaves. Snow gums, while not occurring on the highest peaks are not without their own skills – they can survive large weights of snow and ice on their branches because they have flexible limbs. Perhaps they are the yogis of the plant world.

By contrast, arid environments are typically characterised by low annual rainfall. Australia is the driest inhabited continent – almost half is arid. Rainfall may be low throughout the year or there may be a brief moments of higher rainfall. There might also be a range of different zones within the one habitat. Take a dune, as an example. At the top, plants are exposed to wind and sand-blasting and moisture very quickly drains away. Moister conditions exist in the depressions between dunes – the soil particles are finer and water may collect and stay for longer. *Banksia ornata*, in the Victoria's Little Desert, is adapted to growing only on the tops of sand dunes where water and nutrients are deficient.

But deserts are also places of fluctuation – high temperatures occur during the day but it may become very cold at night. So plants must be able to multi-task. Waxy or hairy leaves decrease water loss and insulate against temperature extremes, and succulent leaves are used to store water. Why are there no cacti in Australia you ask? While there are small succulent plants, large cacti are not a feature of Australia because there is no reliable seasonal rain – it is often sporadic and unpredictable, meaning that the adaptation of storing water in leaves and stems is not the best strategy. Boab trees, while storing water in massive swollen trunks, employ an additional tool to enable them to survive – they lose their leaves in the dry season to conserve water.

A lack of nutrients isn't an obvious stress, but is common in Australia due to our ancient, leached soils. Phosphorous is particularly lacking. Plant adaptations include a narrow creeping or rosette form and a slow rate of growth. Nutrient loss is decreased by having long-lived leaves that are protected from browsing animals with defences like unpalatable chemicals. Plants like spinifex have leaves that roll in on themselves to prevent moisture loss.

Some groups of plants have developed specialised roots in order to maximise uptake of the little nutrients that are present. The Proteaceae (banksia) family have clumps of densely packed fine root hairs that occur near the soil surface (proteoid roots). The banksia family is particularly abundant in Western Australia partly due to the range of diverse mechanisms needed for coping with low nutrient conditions. Indeed, South West Western Australia is a National biodiversity hotspot of more than 8000 plants, 50% of which are endemic.

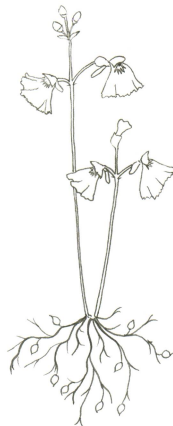
Acacias are able to thrive in low nutrient environments due special nodules on their roots that harness the nitrogen that is abundant in the atmosphere but lacking in the soil. This takes place with the help of bacteria that are able to convert atmospheric nitrogen that would normally be unavailable to the plant. So a symbiotic relationship with another organism is another method for dealing with hardship.

Carnivorous plants are another good example of a way of dealing with lack of nutrients. While pitcher plants and sundews immediately come to mind, a little considered group of carnivorous plants are the diminutive bladderworts. These plants grow in waterlogged areas (another stress!) with low nutrients and have evolved an ingenious way of surviving. They have small bladders on root-like structures that act as tiny vacuums to suck invertebrates out of the growing substrate, these are then digested. The most common example of this is fairies'

aprons (*Utricularia dichotoma*), which can often be seen in moist areas next to walking tracks. They are small, have a leafless stalk with a mauve-to-purple flower and often grow in groups.

Saline inland lakes, mangroves, estuaries and coastal areas represent another harsh environment. Plants may be subject to high salt levels, waterlogging and tidal stresses such as erosion. Mangrove species have aerial roots called pneumatophores that act like snorkels, but also assist in anchoring and supporting the plant. Other plants have roots that can filter out salt so that they only absorb freshwater. Salt can be excreted by specialised glands in some mangrove species or transported to older leaves that are then shed. Many plants in saline environments (halophytes) have a high internal osmotic pressure in order to obtain water.

We perceive these to be harsh environments, but if you removed the stress, these plants don't necessarily grow better – they often grow worse or die. This is because they are so specialised and used to the stress so much so that any major improvement actually becomes a stress. This is why banksias are very sensitive to superphosphate, desert plants can die if watered too much and alpine plants decline in hot conditions. W



Fairies' aprons

Michele Kohout's column, Wilderness [Re]generation, explores the plants and places so unique to Australia and beloved by wanderers. Ask Michele a question by emailing wild@primcreative.com.au.

Increasing the all-important strength-to-weight ratio

Are you avoiding the weights at all costs? Afraid of gaining bulk? Joe Bonington discusses how any adventurer can increase strength without putting on muscle mass

In this article, we'll explore the benefits and reasons why strength training is an absolute must for your outdoor activities, whether you're out on the walking trails, competing in an ultra or on your first alpine ascent.

A stronger you is a stronger you – but what does this really mean?

Strength is a state of mind. To be strong is to be strong in your mind, body in soul. Strength implies resilience, both mentally and physically. Strength is having the mental fortitude to keep going even when things get tough. Strength is being able to cope with the knocks, scrapes and setbacks. Strength is dealing with atrocious conditions and environmental upsets that weren't part of your original plan.

Wilderness and adventure sports and activities have a major difference with most other forms of physical activity. As well as having to be fit enough for our given sport, to be able to cope with the rigours of the physical activities involved, we also have a major – and I mean major – wild card to throw in the mix: environmental conditions. The best laid plans of mice and men are often laid bare by changes in the environment.

THE VALUE OF STRENGTH

When considering training and getting fit for an adventure, those who solely focus on the cardiovascular aspect (which, to be honest, is the majority of would-be explorers) are doing ourselves a major disservice.

As well as specific strengthening for your given activity, you should have a strength and conditioning element that will improve general robustness and resilience – beyond your ability to hammer tent pegs into hard ground.

The stronger you are, the less likely you are to get injured. No, it's not a magic cloak that will protect you from rolled ankles or broken limbs, or from slipping down wet and muddy gullies, but in general improving the strength and conditioning of your muscles will reduce your chances of minor injury, while also improving your ability to recover in the case one does occur.

Even just feeling stronger will help your confidence and self esteem in adverse situations.

Ladies and gents, this is a very important point, so listen up: the aim here is to increase your strength to bodyweight ratio as much as possible. It is not to simply get bigger or heavier (or, conversely, smaller and lighter. There are accurate ways of benchmarking your actual strength as it relates to your body weight, and this is what we're seeking to increase in this type of training. Nobody wants to be hauling an extra five kilograms up a hill regardless of whether that five kilos is muscle mass or otherwise – it still impacts on your energy expenditure as it is still extra mass that requires fuelling.

Trail and ultra runners, as well as some other outdoor enthusiasts regularly misinterpret strong for heavy and for that reason tend to overlook strength and conditioning as part of a healthy preparatory training regime. This may be because, for many people, strength training conjures up images of Arnold Schwarzenegger and big, bulging muscles, pumping iron in testosterone-fuelled gyms. For women there may be a concern about losing the feminine form in acquiring those same, bulging muscles and perhaps a square jaw to boot.

But this is most definitely not what I advocate, nor is it what results from the work I do with the adventurers I train, both male and female. We train in a very specific way so that we get the benefits of the strengthening of our frame without large fluctuations in body mass.

HOW TO GAIN STRENGTH

We train for – mainly – three types of strength.

For virtually all wilderness sports, we train for maximal strength, maximum sustained power training and strength endurance. Some adventure sports also need a certain degree of explosive power as well.

Strength and power is increased by the manipulation of load (weight), repetitions (the amount of times you lift that load), sets (the amount of times you repeat lifting that load) and recovery (the length of time you

wait before you can safely lift that load again).

Unlike other types of training regimes, in preparing for wilderness adventure, we do not go until failure on any repetitions (lifting until failure stresses the muscles, thereby causing micro tears that the body then repairs and builds upon – the basic premise bodybuilders work from to get bigger). We want to stress the muscles and the nervous system in a way that it contracts more efficiently, so that the body recruits muscle fibres more effectively.

So how is this achieved? This is the bit that is counter-intuitive for many people. We train with heavier loads for fewer repetitions, as well as taking longer rests in between sets.

This concept is particularly hard to convince certain segments of the community of. At the risk of being crucified, I'll even name the two worst offending segments. Before I do, keep in mind that I don't consider this to be a generalisation, as I'm purely expressing my personal experience, and of course there are always exceptions. However, for the most part two groups have the hardest time believing heavier loads with less repetitions is best for improving strength without gaining mass: women and trail runners. I can only hope that in reading this, some individuals within this group are more likely to consider the practice as an integral part of their adventure training routine.

So how is the optimal strength and conditioning routine achieved? In short, it's all in the preparation. You must prepare the body for stresses and strains that it will undergo during its preparation for your big adventure.

THE ADAPTIVE PHASE

During this phase, we are essentially preparing the body for the work to come. As I said in Part Two of the series (see Wild 153) this period is six-to-eight weeks long. We want to be stressing the muscles, the joints and the connective tissues, to get them into a good place for the work we will be doing during the next phases. It really is an 'adaptive' phase.

Doing circuits with a medium load of around 8-10 reps, never going to the point

of failure is an easy and effective way of handling this stage of training. At Joe's Basecamp our go-to exercises are the:

- Goblet squat
- Push up
- Single leg deadlift
- Pull up
- Lunge or step up
- Supine row
- Hollow hold

Start with two rounds and add a round each week. Rest for two-to-three minutes after each round.

THE BASE/ACCUMULATION PHASE

The exercises here will change depending on what you are training for, but your exercise selection gets smaller. This is such an important part of training that pays huge dividends on the mountains and trails. Adventurers, climbers and trail runners alike should be doing two dedicated strength sessions per week. This is not doing crossfit or high intensity-style work. This is just working your strength base, building a more robust and resilient frame.

Ideally, both the workouts depicted would be performed each week, with a day or two between them. For the workouts themselves, complete the exercises labeled with a given letter in a circuit, before moving onto the next letter (i.e.: A1 and A2 are a circuit, complete these before starting on B1 and B2).

For someone who is gym savvy and has been training regularly, an advanced technique we use is dubbed 'Maximum Sustained Power' as used by endurance athlete and author Mark Sissons to great effect. This technique is introduced in the second half of the accumulative/ base training phase and continues on in the specific phase. Workouts based on this model are designed to increase the length of time an individual can work at maximum. For trail runners, back country skiers and mountaineers, it's great to use with lower limb exercises, while for climbers it's great for pull-pattern movements.

Lets use the squat as an example:

- Work out at a weight you can comfortably lift for over five sets
- Repeat the exercise as many times as you can without failing
- Rest for 10-20 seconds
- Lift again, also for as many times as possible without reaching failure
- Continue to repeat, until you can only achieve one repetition

Again, I must stress that the idea is to reach a maximum number of repetitions that falls short of failure, especially for this technique. If you're regularly failing it means you'll be building muscle mass and that will impact your strength-to-weight ratio.

Rather, if you follow these routines correctly and without reaching the point of failure, you'll find you've built strength, as well as the ability to sustain that performance, as well as your overall endurance.

MOST IMPORTANTLY

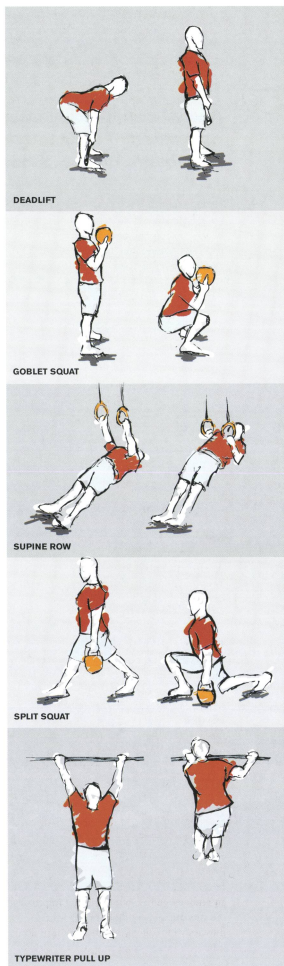
Do not attempt a workout without clearance from your doctor as well as an assessment on your biomechanics from a registered physiotherapist, especially if you have a history of illness or other congenital condition. If possible, find someone to coach you through all movements rather than just relying on Coach YouTube. If you are relying on the online coach, you do so at your own risk.

Make sure you are thoroughly warmed up and have no pre-existing injuries or niggles.

In our next instalment we will look at the 'specific pause' and how to best tailor your workouts for your given activity. [W](#)

WORKOUT 1	SETS	REPS	REST
A1. Turkish get up	5	4	3 mins
A2. Loaded push up	5	4	3 mins
B1. Split squat	5	4	3 mins
B2. Pull u	5	4	3 mins

WORKOUT 2	SETS	REPS	REST
A1. Deadlift	5	4	3 mins
A2. Overhead Press	5	4	3 mins
B1. Single leg squat - Elevated	5	4	3 mins
B2. Typewriter	5	4	3 mins



Joe Bonington is a strength and conditioning expert, specialising in wilderness adventure activities and expeditions. As the owner of Joe's Basecamp Gym on Sydney's northern beaches, he's able to share his expertise with new generations of outdoor enthusiasts and invites you to contact him with suggestions for future topics for his columns, or any specific questions you may have.



joe@joesbasecamp.com.au

The ultimate offroad vehicle

Any wilderness adventurer worth their salt knows there are more vehicular options than a diesel-guzzling 4WD to get around in, writes *Stuart Matheson*. But which is best?

If you are the kind of person that enjoys escaping civilisation and retreating to the wilderness, then you have probably tried and tested many options to convey yourself and your gear to those unspoilt areas of our planet. There are numerous options open to us: many places allow vehicle access by 4x4, while others allow non-motorised access such as walking, cycling or paddling (kayaks/canoes), but which of these is the best?

There is a whole host of requirements we may look to fulfil if we want to be able to cover the distance through the landscape it becoming too arduous. Most people like to take a few comforts and luxuries to see us through the trip (unless you are the 'hardcore' survivalist type). If you wish to combine remote wilderness adventure while covering the most ground and minimising your impact all at the same

time, then you begin to narrow your options. Depending on the amount of gear you wish to carry, those options may narrow further still. Then there's the added consideration of the variety of terrain you plan on traversing.

Here's a breakdown on some common options:

- **4WD vehicle** – Can carry lots of gear but causes serious damage to the landscape. They not only separate you from the environment, but being restricted to certain routes means you'll probably end up running into many other kitted-up 4WD teams.
- **Boots and a pack** – An excellent way to truly experience the landscape, you can get almost anywhere with a little effort. The down side though is that you have to carry all your supplies in your rucksack and this can mean being distinctly more frugal with the little comforts. This is a bigger problem for some people, while others enjoy the freedom of travelling unencumbered.

- **Cycling** – Like walking, the bike allows us to be involved with the landscape and make carrying our load a little easier while still covering ground. You still can't load up too many supplies though and the added bulk of a bicycle will potentially limit access to certain places. There is also the perennial discussion regarding the damage bikes do to tracks and parks in general. Best use judiciously.
- **Paddling (kayaks/canoes/packrafts)** – Here we have some versatility. With a watercraft we can paddle across water while carrying ample supplies. You can get off and walk to other areas and we have only a limited impact on the environment. Sea kayaks are good for the sea, sit on tops are good for ease of use and stability, and packrafts can literally be packed up into a bag, but which watercraft can do it all?

For me the answer has to be the open canoe (sometimes referred to as a Canadian canoe). I believe this is one craft that can do it all. The classically shaped prospector-



style canoe, that is instantly recognisable, can and has been used to cross large areas of open water, descend long rivers with serious whitewater rapids, undertake coastal voyages, move large amounts of supplies with relative ease, and all this while still being light enough to be picked up and portaged around waterfalls or other hazards too dangerous to negotiate. This style of craft is definitely the ultimate off road vehicle.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Throughout history almost every civilisation that has been near a body of water has developed some form of canoe. From tiny coracles to massive war canoes, people developed vessels that would allow them to take to the water for transport, trade, warfare and, more recently, recreation.

The way canoes have been built has taken many forms. From solid-shaped dug out tree trunks to modern carbon Kevlar construction, there has been a lot of innovation in materials and design. The classic-style open (Canadian) canoe I like so much struck a successful design early on. The fact that there has been very little change to the shape, and that the only real improvements have been made in the robustness of the construction materials, is testament to the skill and knowledge of the original developers.

As the name suggests the "Canadian" canoe originated in North America. It is a craft that was developed and created by the indigenous peoples of what is modern day Canada. The materials first used to build these canoes were birch bark on a wooden frame, but these construction materials meant that the craft had to be handled with care to avoid damage. Even so it still proved to be the perfect craft for transporting people and goods around the lakes and rivers of North America. The Europeans who settled in Canada were so impressed with this style of boat that they copied the design and it became the major transporter of goods in early Canada.

The early settler designs were instead built with canvas around a wooden frame and in some cases were supersized; canoes were built that carried huge loads and were paddled by six to eight men (these boats could still be portaged around obstacles by the paddling team). The 'voyageurs' as they were known were the equivalent of road and rail haulage in early Canada, without them and the canoe, the trade links throughout Canada would have been far more difficult to establish.

MODERN-DAY CANOEING

As with all things there has been fragmentation and specialisation in areas of canoe sports. From canoe slalom or canoe sailing at the Olympics to specialist white water open canoeists descending steep technical Grade 4 and 5 rivers, the design features have been pushed to obtain maximum performance.

However, for all-round recreational use, the classic 15 or 16-foot prospector style still wins out. Built out of modern materials (PE, Royalex, fibreglass) these boats can withstand a little more punishment than their canvas-on-frame or birch bark forebears. This resilience allows the intrepid wanderer to get up to all sorts of adventures with confidence.

For some inspiration, I've listed below some of my personal favourite adventures:

- Load up the whole family into the boat and head out on the water for a day trip
- Load the boat full of camping gear (luxuries and kitchen sink included) and head off on a multi-day wilderness camping adventure
- Paddling solo or tandem, head down some fun white water sections. With a bit of practice and knowledge it is possible to comfortably paddle up to around Grade 3 rapids (skills and knowledge do need to be developed first)
- Improvise a sailing cloth, or rig a permanent sailing rig to have fun on lakes and inlets on windier days
- Source-to-sea trips: Starting at the source of a river and following it to the sea makes for an entertaining adventure

Compared to sit on top kayaks (or kayaks in general), attaining the skills required to handle an open canoe can take a little more practice and time, but the rewards are well worth the effort. Once you can handle the boat correctly you have many more adventure options open to you. Paddling even a heavily loaded boat should feel effortless; it is all about technique rather than force.

Done well, open canoeing is an art form in itself. Surely all those Canadians can't be wrong!

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Wintry dishes

Colder temperatures open a new realm of culinary possibilities for the outdoor chef, writes *Andrew Davison*

Alpine winter journeys open up a whole new world of food for a bushwalker or ski tourer. Freezing evening temperatures and a surrounding of ice allows one to take foods that may not normally last the distance on a summer walk in the same place. Meats, cheeses and other perishables, if stewed

correctly, can last the duration of a short trip, and in some cases even the lengthiest of journeys.

Shorter daylight hours mean it is likely you will be cooking in the dark, so simplicity is a consideration most of the time. Additionally, standing around waiting for a lengthy breakfast or lunch

to cook usually means cold and uncomfortable feet.

There's also a need to eat more in the bush in winter; the calories burned while pushing through snow need to be adequately compensated, so bulk up on a hardy warming meal and then bring on dessert.

SNOW-SET CAKE

Although a warm dessert on a winter trip is most suitable, the idea of using your surroundings to assist in preparing your meal is appealing, also this dessert gives you a load of calories for a heavy day of skiing. This dessert will need to sit in deep snow for one or two hours to set, so best to make this ahead of dinner.

INGREDIENTS

50g butter
100g chocolate, chopped
1 tablespoon of condensed milk
50g chopped dried fruit and nuts (unsalted)

IN THE FIELD

Over a very low heat melt the butter with the condensed milk, once melted add the chocolate and constantly stir over a very low heat (overheating will result in burning the chocolate). Once melted add the chopped nuts and dried fruits, stir together and pour into your mould. Set in the snow until firm. For this recipe you will require a mould for the cake to set in. I have found that the small collapsible silicon cups (greased with a little oil) work excellent for this or silicon or paper cupcake cups also work well. However, you could allow the cake to set in the pot it was made in and eat it directly from that or a simple cup could be made from foil.





SIMPLE PEA AND HAM RISOTTO

This is an easy all-in dish. Traditionally when cooking risotto the stock is slowly added to the rice over a lengthy period. Here I have used risotto rice for that heavy, creamy and warming texture by simply adding enough water to let it simmer and cook without much fuss, you can add more water if you want to make a soup. The bacon, butter and cheese in this dish will keep the calorie count up, warm the body and they're suited for carrying in winter conditions.

INGREDIENTS

1 large dessert spoon of butter
 ½ an onion diced
 ½ a cup of risotto rice
 150g of ham or bacon
 ½ cup of dried peas
 1 chicken stock cube
 30g of grated parmesan

METHOD

In a large pot heat the butter over a medium heat and add the onion and fry for a few minutes. Now add the rice, diced ham, peas, two cups of water and the stock cube. Cover and gently simmer until the rice is cooked, the peas are rehydrated and the liquid has reduced to thick and creamy. Stir in grated parmesan and serve.



HOT CARAMEL MILK

For the warmest night's sleep, a small sweet snack or hot drink or both before you snugg into your downy cocoon will help keep you toasty throughout the night.

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup sugar
 1 large tablespoon of thick pure cream
 ½ a vanilla bean (optional)
 Either ½ a cinnamon quill or 2 star anise
 1½ cups of full cream milk powder (enough to make 500ml of milk)
 Cinnamon powder or grated nutmeg to serve (optional)

AT HOME

Place the sugar in a small fry pan over a medium heat and stir continuously. Once the sugar has become liquid and starting to colour, add the cream and stir through until the mix has taken on a nice caramel colour. Cool, then put the caramel in a small container, it will keep for weeks in the fridge.

IN THE FIELD

In a small pot add water to the milk powder, stir and add the vanilla and cinnamon, heat until just before boiling. Now add the premade caramel and mix to dissolve. Serve dusted with cinnamon powder or grated nutmeg and a ginger nut biscuit if desired.

Andrew Davison takes pleasure in the simplicity of being in the bush. A world traveller and culinary connoisseur, he has become a regular *Wild* contributor.



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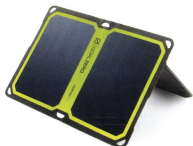


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2 Aerospace Goggle from \$289.95

Due to the Julbo's exclusive ventilation technology, these goggles claim to perform as well going uphill as they do while going down, making them even great for use in the backcountry.

www.mont.com.au

3 Nirvana Self-bailer from \$1600

Kokopelli's latest one-person, white water packraft now available. Designed to self-bail so no skirt required; it also includes a storage pocket at rear for a low centre of gravity.

www.paddlesports.com.au

4 Forge Divide \$39.95

An insulated mug designed for drinking hot liquids. The press button opens a drinking valve, which seals when released to prevent scalding leaks.

www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

5 Moondance 2 \$729.95

Latest version of Mont's best-selling Moondance 2-person tent has the same lightweight, strong structure with 2 doors, 2 vestibules and a 10,000mm PU-laminated floor offering 3-4 season protection.

www.mont.com.au

6 Free Thinker Bib \$700

For added protection, these DWR-treated overalls have a zip-off bib suitable for use in deep snow skiing. Even better, it contains an inbuilt Recco avalanche rescue reflector should the worst occur.

www.thenorthface.com.au

7 Nomad 7 Plus \$159

The latest portable solar panel from Goal Zero, the Nomad 7 Plus weighs just 363g and includes a kickstand, solar intensity indicator and a maximum output of 7W.

www.goalzero.com.au

8 Kode 32 \$199.95

A snow-going daypack from Osprey with a 32L volume is designed with a J-clip shovel pocket and straps to carry skis or a snowboard as well as glove-friendly buckles and zippers.

www.outdooragencies.com.au

9 The WindBurner \$329.95

New stove system from MSR. The radiant burner and enclosed design operates more efficiently than other burners, getting your meal or drink warm faster in adverse conditions.

www.spelean.com.au

10 Edelrid Tauri \$449.95

Max. 280 lumens, weighing 126g and rated to IPX7, this headlamp from Edelrid is designed for fast-paced endurance sports. Includes optional third headband for improved stability.

www.expeditionequipment.com.au

11 2016 Storm Headlamp \$99.95

The sealed, waterproof housing is rated to IP67 in this redesigned headlamp from Black Diamond. Up to 250 lumens in brightness with red and green night vision modes.

www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

12 Silnx Zip Polo \$179.95

Made from Polartec Power Stretch Pro fabric, this Mont top is designed to suit high intensity activity in very cold conditions, and quickly wicks moisture away from the skin.

www.mont.com.au



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16 Grandpa's FireFork 2 Pack \$14.95

This implement from Light My Fire is designed with curved points to secure food hygienically at the end of just about any stick. Simple to use and even easier to carry. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

14 Seawool Check Long Sleeve Shirt \$119.95

Constructed from recycled plastic, oyster shells and cotton, the Mountain Designs' Seawool shirts in men's and women's are soft, warm and wrinkle resistant, perfect for low intensity outdoor adventures. www.mountaindesigns.com

15 Reactik \$149.95

Offering up to 190 lumens, this headlamp from Petzl is designed for high-energy, intense activities. Featuring an ambient light sensor, the Reactik automatically adjusts to the user's requirements. spelean.com.au

16 Spindrift Specialist Boxfoot \$889.95

Ideal for alpine touring and back country adventures, this Mont sleeping bag is filled with 850 loft duck down (DWR treated) with a comfort rating down to -9°C for women and -15°C for men. www.mont.com.au

17 Expander Sleeping Bag Liner from \$34.95

With five different styles, Sea To Summit's Expander Liners are made from stretch knit poly-cotton so their more elastic and warmer than a straight cotton alternative. Includes an antimicrobial treatment. www.seatosummit.com.au

18 Proton \$229.95

Weighing in around 300g, the Scarpa Proton is a light trail runner with deep, pyramidal lugs on the sole, extensive heel cushioning and a splashproof, breathable upper. www.paddyallin.com.au

19 Meta Bottle with Micro Filter \$119.95

Scoop, close and drink with this water bottle from Platypus; featuring a pump-free water filter to keep your water clean when in the wild. spelean.com.au

20 LunchKit \$29.95

This six-piece set from Light My Fire is all you need to carry your lunch with you, including a 500ml plate, 900ml bowl and spoon, it all packs together with the included harness. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

21 Revolt Down Jacket \$299.95

Windproof, water resistant and filled with responsibly sourced duck down for enhanced comfort and warmth from Mountain Designs. www.mountaindesigns.com

22 Travelsafe SL Portable Safe \$135.95

While travelling overseas, this bag acts as an ideal security measure for storing valuables, with encompassing mesh and locking solution. After use, the bag packs flat for travel and storage. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

23 Meta Bottle from \$49.95

Water bottles from Platypus in 750ml and 1L varieties. Flexible, packable and lightweight makes this product a great solution for hydration whether in transit or on the track. spelean.com.au

24 P7R Torch \$231

An efficient torch from Led Lenser, this model provides up to 1000 lumens, a beam distance of 210 metres or 40 hours of burn time at low power. It weighs just 210g. www.ledlenser.com.au

TRIED AND TESTED

It's not usually the case that an additional piece of gear can help increase your range, health and endurance while bushwalking, but that's exactly what a good pair of trekking poles will do.

INTRODUCTION

Like many items of traditional adventure gear, the trekking poles origins lie obscured in the depths of antiquity. Descended of the humble walking stick, modern trekking poles tend to be lighter, adjustable and collapsible. More common in the US and Europe, only a small segment of Australia's outdoor market has caught on to the benefits a good pair of trekking poles

provide. Used correctly, they will help improve your strength and endurance over flat terrain, while allowing you to go further and place less stress on your back, hips and knees over rugged terrain. For these reasons, walkers with joint complaints or those seeking to rehabilitate an injury may find their physio prescribing a pair of poles.

One notable trend that is also likely to have persisted throughout time is the use of trekking poles as

part of shelter construction. Some simple tarp designs require the use of trekking poles and so this is a specific consideration for those to research if interested.

As with just about all gear these days, there are now more brands and models of trekking poles to choose from and so making a purchasing decision can be that little bit more difficult. In this review, we've sought to cover the major concerns for people who might be seeking a

Model	Pole construction	Effective length (cm)	Collapsed length (cm)	Snow basket?	Weight per pole (g)	Price
Black Diamond Alpine Carbon	Carbon	63-130	63	Yes	237.5	\$249.95
Black Diamond Distance Carbon FLZ	Carbon	120-140	40	No	235	\$269.95
Helinox TL125	Aluminium	125	38	Optional extra	164	\$198.00
Helinox LBB135	Aluminium	112-135	54	Optional extra	238	\$244.00
Komperdell C3 Carbon Power Lock	Carbon	68-145	68	Optional extra	220	\$229.95
MSR Swift 3	Aluminium	105-130	57	Optional extra	225.5	\$279.95
MSR Talus TR-2	Aluminium	105-130	73	Optional extra	299.5	\$319.95
Leki 16 Terrano	Aluminium	72-145	72	Optional extra	299	\$189.99
Leki Thermolite XL	Aluminium	69-135	69	Optional extra	238	\$289.99

pair to use while bushwalking, alpine hiking, snowshoeing and mountaineering. Each model reviewed is fit for purpose and differentiated in some way, so that it's up to the reader to decide which is best for them.

As usual, we highly recommend visiting an outdoor specialist retailer in order to get properly sized up for a pair prior to purchase, especially if it's the first pair of trekking poles you'll buy.

NOTES

On durability – In this round of Tried and Tested, we have not attempted to test these products for their durability or ruggedness. Trekking poles are largely constructed of a rigid carbon (which is more brittle) or an aluminium alloy (which are

more flexible), and it's expected that any model would be damaged if enough stress were applied. Wear and tear on the poles' tips is also inevitable.

On sizing – Trekking poles tend to be either fixed length or adjustable, with some collapsing down further than their minimum effective length. Regardless of the pair you choose, it's critical to ensure they have an effective length or range of effective lengths that is suitable for your height and arm length. This will also vary according to preference and also whether the user is going uphill or down, which explains the popularity of adjustable poles. As a rough guide, your forearms should be perfectly level at hip height when the pole is held comfortably out in front with tips touching the

ground. You will therefore have your forearms and level ground forming parallel lines, with the poles at right angles between them.

On test conditions – We tested these poles over a number of day hikes in the Howqua region of the Australian Alps, Victoria. As a result we were able to test the performance of the poles at a range of gradients and over quite variable terrain. Packs were worn with between 10 and 15 kilograms worth of gear to give an indication of usage over a multi-day journey. There are many more models and sizes of trekking poles than those we've tested here, but at least this should give some overview of key alternatives.



LEKI

Karl Lenhart founded the German-based Leki in 1948. Lenhart, a skier, was supposedly dissatisfied with the quality of available ski poles and decided to begin manufacturing them himself. With ski poles at the heart of the business, it's little wonder that Leki has gone on to offer a broad range of Nordic walking and trekking poles as well. The brand's long history has resulted in an expertise and dedicated European and US market that allows it to support a broad variety of models. We included two of the current crop in our trial.

1. Thermolite XL

This three-piece, adjustable trekking pole has a hybrid adjustment system that Leki describes as a combination of their Speed Lock 2 and Super Lock system, which is designed to offer the simplicity of a screw adjustment and the strength of a lever-based lock. The antishock mechanism was certainly noticeable when travelling over rocks and well-compacted surfaces, and the rubber 'Aergon' grips offered comfort, albeit a little 'cooler' feeling than the Terrano's cork grip. Leki also sent out an example of its photo adaptor for these types of grips, which essentially turns the pole into a makeshift monopod for lightweight cameras.

2. 16 Terrano

The Terrano can be considered as the slightly more homely version of the Thermolite, being both a touch heavier and longer; it still boasts the hybrid Speed Lock and Super Lock for easy adjustment. For some, the cork grip and rounded top will feel warmer to bare skin and the inclusion of the antishock technology also helps keep you hiking smoothly. We felt that, after comparing both Leki poles directly, the Thermolite would probably suit high-intensity walkers better, while the Terrano would be well suited to a more leisurely ramble. Size is, as always, the major consideration for most and the Terrano's extra length means it may be more suited to taller users.

BLACK DIAMOND

As a company, Black Diamond produces a wide variety of equipment for climbers and skiers and has been doing so for decades. Walking and mountaineering are also a key market for the company and it therefore manufactures a wide variety of poles. We were provided one of its 'Z-Poles', so named due to their three-piece, fold-down construction. Both poles are constructed from carbon fibre, which decreases the weight of the pole but increases the likelihood of it snapping under pressure.

3. Distance Carbon FLZ

Due to the pole's construction, it packs right down into a more compact arrangement while remaining adjustable, all of which was very easy to operate. Like the Alpine version, it comes with interchangeable tips so you can choose between non-scarring rubber options and the harder carbide, the latter offering greater purchase in slippery conditions. Unlike its counterpart, however, we couldn't see if it's possible to change its small, trekking basket with a larger snow basket, something that would come in handy for snowshoeing or hiking through light snow.

4. Alpine Carbon

Without the fold-down nature of the Z-Pole, this alternative isn't quite as compact as the Distance Carbon FLZ, however it comes with interchangeable baskets for handling a wider variety of alpine environs as well as both carbide and rubber tip options. The three telescoping shafts also offer a broad span of adjustment, while the cork grips are warmer to the hand. Again, the difference between the two models offered by Black Diamond appears to be the choice between a performance option and more of an all-rounder. Either would be suitable for most users, but the Distance models lighter weight and added portability factor justify the slight difference in price.

KOMPERDELL

An Austrian brand, Komperdell specialises in manufacturing poles for both skiing and trekking in all their forms, they also offer avalanche shovels and snowshoes to round out the catalogue. Offering a number of carbon and aluminium options, we tried out the new C3 Carbon Power Lock

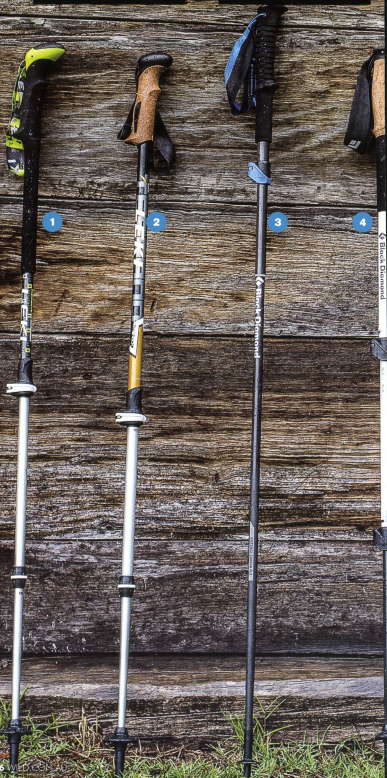
5. C3 Carbon Power Lock

Featuring Komperdell's third iteration of its Power Lock mechanism, this telescoping, three-piece pole competes favourably

with other poles of the same design. The padded strap is especially comfortable and the trekking basket it comes with provides good stability over muddy ground. While we have this pictured with its rubber tip cover on (fine for use over even ground), these can be removed to reveal the tungsten/carbide flex tip. This was also one of the lightest poles we reviewed and it therefore seems well priced as a result.

MSR

Mountain Safety Research is a well-regarded US brand



that has gained a reputation for its military/tactical-grade designs. Offering a broad range of product categories, MSR doesn't boast the widest selection of poles, but those they do have offer some key differences to many of the competitors. MSR's trekking poles are all aluminium, with the two we tried based on telescoping action and hand-release mechanism.

6. Swift 3

The Swift 3 is the ultralight model from the MSR range, and it compares favourably in this area to the carbon varieties we tested. The

'SureLock' adjustment mechanism makes it quite simple to change the length of the poles on the go, meaning less stopping due to a change in terrain. The major concern here is that any warping of the aluminium over time will impact on the adjustment mechanism, so this is something to take into account if you know you'll bang them up. Ventilated straps were comfortable around the hand and the tungsten tips provided purchase in all conditions. This model also collapses further than the Talus, increasing portability.

7. Talus TR-2

Adding a quick release trigger to the SureLock adjustment system makes the Talus even easier to adjust on the fly. The added weight is the trade off for a more sturdy build, so you would expect this model to outlast the Swift. Both these key points are going to justify the additional price for the right user, with the only real negative being the collapsed length, which at 73 centimetres is considerably greater than the Swift. All-in-all, the Talus was a favourite among the entire selection, with the unique adjustment

mechanism really setting it apart.

HELINOX

Produced by aluminium alloy specialist DAC, Helinox's product range includes chairs, poles, pegs and more. Its walking pole range includes seven different series, but we only had room to try two of them (TL and LBB). Nevertheless the poles tested appeared suitable for most walkers, however those needing something at the longer or more durable end of the scale may like to look at Helinox's DL and GL series

8. LBB135

The LBB series is characterised by the poles' ability to adjust as well as folding down into a more compact format, giving a flexibility of use comparable to the Black Diamond options. Like the Komperdell product, these are supplied with rubber tip covers that are designed for use on pavement or other flat, even surfaces, as well as for storing the poles when not in use. The lever lock mechanism is easy to operate and the 'no touch' button lock for securing the lower section provides a nice point of difference as fiddling with telescoping screw locks all the time can become grating over time.

9. TL125

This was the only fixed-length pole tested; yet it's also the pole that collapses down furthest, providing some key lines of difference to consider. With a fixed length, Helinox has had to offer alternative size options in this range, but be warned there are just two smaller options, rather than a longer one. The TL125 may be suitable for a person up to 195cm, but any taller you'd have to consider another range of poles. Nevertheless, a cost-effective option if you're not terribly concerned with changing the length of the poles depending on whether you're going uphill or down. Helinox also offers snow baskets suitable for both the styles of pole we've tested, but notes that they can be dislodged from the TL series poles in demanding conditions (which is where the LBB would probably be more suitable anyway).



Paddys Nut and Mt Thetis

Alistair and Bruce Paton head back to the Overland Track to explore some geographical icons

The Overland Track wasn't designed as a tourist attraction.

Unlike many of the 'great walks' opened in recent years, the route was a hotchpotch of tracks blazed by miners, fur trappers and cattle grazers across Tasmania's central highlands (walkers in the 1930s could still run into a cow on the Pelion Plains).

It just happened that connecting them created a fantastic hike that is justly famous around the world for its mixture of rugged mountains, lakes, waterfalls and alpine meadows that make for outstanding bushwalking.

But perhaps it isn't such a fluke – after all, if you draw a 70-kilometre line on a

map between any two random points in the 161,000-hectare Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park you are likely to end up with a similar result.

Take a map of the Overland Track and scan the country to the west of the famous trail. The names are enticing – Fossil Hill, The Amphitheatre, High Dome – but most of the peaks don't even have names. The truly determined can head for the hills and spend days or weeks in the serious wilderness. But you don't have to venture far from the very well-trodden path to experience a taste of this marvelous scenery.

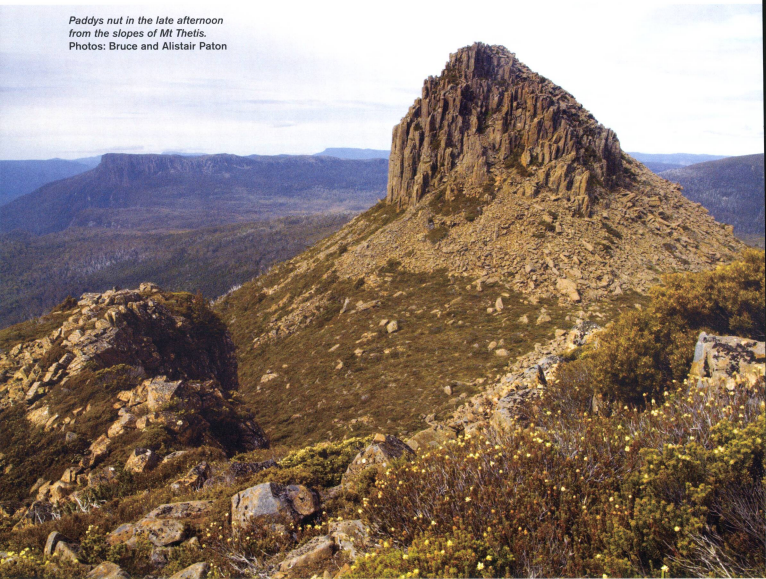
An expedition that features a mixture of formed tracks and finding your

own path through dense forest and over boulder-strewn slopes is a great way to sample some of the truly wild mountains that didn't quite make it on the Overland Track itinerary, and to get away from the crowds and have a piece of wild Tasmania to yourself.

Paddy's Nut and Mount Thetis are located just a few kilometres from the Overland Track but reaching them requires off-track navigation skills and a head for heights. Fantastic views and a unique perspective of a famous wilderness is a just reward. Throw in a side trip to Mount Oakleigh and you have a great six-day expedition the equal of any in Australia.

Paddys nut in the late afternoon from the slopes of Mt Thetis.

Photos: Bruce and Alistair Paton



FLORA & FAUNA

The area covered by this walk features all the endemic plants Tasmania is known for – pandanus feature in nearly every scene, scoparia plants add a splash of colour to the landscape (along with fagus in autumn) and ancient pencil pines find a home on the high saddles. The route also passes through sections of rainforest and grassland. Walking on the Pelion Plains it is hard to avoid bumping into wombats, echidnas and Bennett's wallabies – there is a very healthy population of these furry critters around New Pelion Hut. Lucky visitors might also spot a quoll or Tasmanian Devil.

ACCESS

The Arm River Track is accessed via the small town of Mole Creek, about 45 minutes' drive west of Launceston and a similar distance south of Devonport. Follow road B12 west for 15km towards King Solomons Cave then turn left onto C138. After 6km the road becomes C171. Continue south past Parangana Dam and after another 7km turn right on to Arm Road. At a fork in the road take the left option, following the sign to East Pelion Track. This unsealed road continues for about 15km to a small sign pointing the way to a car park for the Arm River Track.

WEATHER

This is Tasmania, so be prepared for anything at any time of year; February usually offers the most stable weather but you may still encounter snow even at the height of summer. Bring gear for wet and cold conditions – plus sunscreen and a hat for possible blazing heat. The Bureau of Meteorology website now features a New Pelion forecast (bom.gov.au/tas/forecasts/new-pelion-hut).

CAMPING AND ACCOMMODATION

The first, fourth and fifth nights out are spent at New Pelion Hut, the newest and most spacious of the huts on the Overland Track. Since hikers walking the track have paid for the privilege they have first access to the wooden bunks, but tent platforms are nearby and you still have access to the hut for water, toilets and space for cooking. The other nights are spent at an unmarked bush campsite, although in this part of the world finding water is not a major concern.

SAFETY/WARNINGS

Walking off track in Tasmania is serious business. Compass skills and experience in off-track navigation are essential, and a satellite phone and EPIRB are recommended additions to the gear list. A large dose of common sense will go a long way, as will the ability to spot pink tape wrapped around a tree branch.

Sections of the route require traversing high exposed ridges with no marked trail and a heavy pack – these are not for the faint-hearted. Others involve boulder scrambling, pushing through dense scrub and traversing patches of Tasmania's notorious mud – expect walking to take longer than you think. Let friends know where you're going and when you expect to return – they are the ones who will raise the alarm if you're not back in time. Filling out the log book in New Pelion Hut is a good back-up.

TRACKS

This route follows the full range of track conditions – from heavily manicured boardwalks to nothing at all. The Arm River Track is relatively easy going and the route also follows the Overland Track for a short distance. After that, you're on your own. Walkers have (very) helpfully left marks to

find a route through the forest and rock cairns in some sections, but expect to use your compass and GPS to find your way in others.

MAPS

The 1:100,000 Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair map covers the entire walk, and the 1:25,000 Achilles provides much greater detail of the off-track section. A highly recommended tip is to download the map onto a mobile phone using the PDF Maps app. Tasmanian topographical maps are free to download, and if you turn on the location feature your iPhone's GPS will place a trusty blue dot on your location on the map even if you don't have mobile reception (although this can be obtained on some of the high points). The app only provides the 1:25,000 maps, so you will need to download Achilles, Rowallen and Cathedral to cover the entire walk.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The bushwalking bible for this area is Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks by John and Monica Chapman and John Siseman. It includes notes for the Overland Track, Arm River Track and a brief overview of the Mount Thetis.



THE WALK

DAY WALKS

DAY 1: Arm Road to New Pelion Hut (12.4km, 4 hours)

Leaving the car park, the hike begins by jumping over a log and walking up a creek. The track soon emerges and winds through delightful cool temperate rainforest before crossing another creek on another large log (with a wire handrail to help with balance) then starts a steep climb to attain the central plateau – gaining about 300 metres in about a kilometre of walking. The well-defined track zigzags up the slope through eucalypt forest, with a cascade beside the path providing a nice distraction from the climb.

After passing a sign marking entry to the national park the path levels out and passes the shore of Lake Price. The peak of Mount Pillinger rises beyond the lake and is reflected in the water on a still day (a walk to the summit is a 2-3 hour side-trip). Continue on the Arm River Track and walk through a mix of forest and open country for 1km to Wurrugarra Creek, which is crossed

60 people. There are two large water tanks, composting toilets and wooden tent platforms you can use if the hut is full.

DAY 2: New Pelion Hut to Paddy's Nut saddle (5.5km, 4-5 hours)

Make the most of the comforts of the hut before following signs to join up with the Overland Track and turning right to head north – 'the wrong way' as registered walkers are required to walk north to south. This may prompt some questions (and strange looks) but independent hikers are permitted to use the track for short distances.

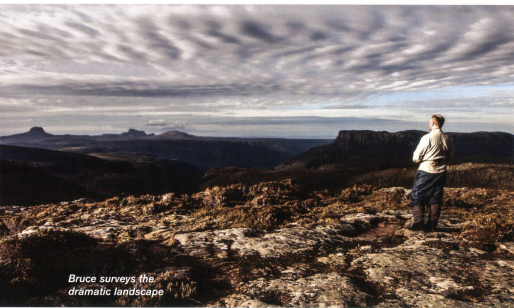
The wooden boardwalk passes a turnoff to Old Pelion Hut after about one kilometre then enters the forest. About 200 metres after crossing a creek on a wooden bridge look for an orange blaze on a narrow tree trunk beside the track as it enters a small clearing – this is the start of the off-track adventure. The first task is to negotiate a forested slope on the flank of Mount Ossa. The compass heading is directly south but the route is a lot more convoluted to find a path between the trees – thankfully pink tape, reflectors and blazes on tree trunks guide the way, although sometimes it can be tricky to locate the next one.

the route, and there are patches of deep mud before reaching a gully that runs east-west. The route to the saddle between Mount Ossa and Paddy's Nut – your campsite for the day – requires a short sharp climb through dense scrub. At times it's an effort to squeeze a heavy pack between tree trunks, under low-hanging branches and up the occasional small cliff. Again, pink ties lead the way. Near the top of the climb the track passes a small abandoned coalmine before emerging out of the forest on a grassy slope.

At this point you have the option of turning right and pushing through more scoria but the recommended route is to skirt to the left of the cliff-line above and climb to its top. It's a sharp scramble but the reward is a small plateau dotted with beautiful alpine tarns, and commanding views over the ground covered so far, and on to Mount Oakleigh to the east and the jagged profile of Cradle Mountain about 20 kilometres to the north. A rough track can be picked up again and followed west. It drops off the plateau to pass more tarns and then descend to the saddle. There are excellent sheltered campsites beside a grove of pencil pines, as well as more exposed sites higher up around the tarns. After setting up camp and a suitable rest it's worth exploring Paddy's Nut, the small peak that rises directly to the west. Getting to the top is a matter of negotiating a steep slope of scree, boulders and scrub – generally speaking walking on rocks is the quickest way forward. Views from the 1352m summit are dominated by Mount Thetis, Mount Ossa and Mount Pelion West, with other peaks of the Pelion region rising in the background and jagged summits of the Du Cane Range on the southern horizon. Take care finding a route down to camp.

DAY 3: Paddy's Nut Saddle to Mount Thetis (return) (4km, 6 hours)

The middle day of the hike is done without packs, but is all off track, so take supplies including food for the day and a rain jacket, allow lots of time and keep an eye on the weather – the route is very exposed and involves extensive boulder scrambling with large drops, so it is not advisable to cover it in bad weather or when the rocks are wet. From the campsite head back up the southern side of Paddy's Nut, contouring to the left to stay below the upper slopes, until you reach the saddle between Paddy's Nut and Mount Thetis. From a distance this looks like an inviting (if exposed) campsite, but on closer inspection it is covered in more boulders, which would make for a very uncomfortable night's camp! The route from here takes you up the steep ridge leading down from Mount Thetis; start



Bruce surveys the dramatic landscape

on a metal bridge. From here the track rises gently then crosses a low saddle and descends for 2.5 kilometres through forest to the eastern edge of Lake Ayr, under the cliffs of Mount Oakleigh. The track then crosses buttongrass plains and sections of eucalypt forest for 2.4 kilometres to a junction with the track to Mount Oakleigh (which will be visited later), just before a suspension bridge over Douglas Creek. It's another 500 metres of easy walking to reach New Pelion Hut. The hut was built in 2001 and sleeps up to

The route gains roughly 250 metres in altitude over the course of the day, with about half of that in this first section, so it's a relief when the forest starts to thin out and a rough track emerges across a grassy hilltop at the top of the slope. The climb continues at a more gradual pace and walking becomes more enjoyable as peaks gradually appear above the horizon – Mount Ossa, Mount Pelion West, Paddy's Nut. The track then passes through a section of thick scoria, which is picturesque but harder going – reflectors on small tree trunks mark

by heading slightly to the south (left) of the saddle and then scrambling up a steep vegetated gully to a viewpoint below some large rocks. The views from here are quite magnificent, with the cliffs of Paddy's Nut in the foreground backed by the massive shape of Mount Pelion West and the Forth River Valley overlooked by the cliffs of Mount Oakleigh. This is a good spot to turn around if conditions are not ideal or you are concerned about heights.

To continue to the summit, head along the crest of the ridge, descending briefly to contour below a rock outcrop, then follow the rough path to the base of the scree slopes. From here it's all boulder-scrambling; there are occasional cairns to guide the way, but mostly it's a matter of carefully selecting your route as you head up the mountain.

Eventually the boulders end and you find yourself on the summit plateau with grandstand views of much of central and western Tasmania. It's worthwhile allowing some time to explore and soak in the vistas before you return via the same route to your campsite below Paddy's Nut. If you have more time, and good navigation skills, it is possible to find a path down the western side of the mountain to Leonards Tarn. You can extend the trip by camping here (then exploring Mount Achilles, which rises above the lake) but carrying packs makes this route extremely tricky, especially finding your way back up Mount Thetis and down to the Paddy's Nut saddle.

DAY 4: Paddy's Nut Saddle to New Pelion Hut (5.5km, 4-5 hours)

Take the same route as on day two, but in reverse – you will find the going somewhat easier as it is downhill!

To finish the hike you can do the side-trip to Mount Oakleigh in the afternoon (but be wary of returning before dark), early the next morning then hiking out via the Arm River Track, or make a day of it to avoid pushing

yourself too hard and fully experience the magic of the area. We recommend the last option!

DAY 5: New Pelion Hut to Mount Oakleigh (return) (9.6km, 4 hours)

The fifth day is another side trip up one of the iconic peaks of the Overland Track. From New Pelion Hut follow the Arm River Track north to the river crossing 400m from the hut and turn left at the sign-posted junction. A boardwalk snakes across the buttongrass plain for 1km then enters rainforest. The track is very muddy in places as it begins to climb – again ties on branches, and the occasional tin can, help mark the way if the route is unclear.

The path soon becomes much steeper, gaining about 400m of elevation over the next 1km – in places rocks and tree roots provide helpful hand-

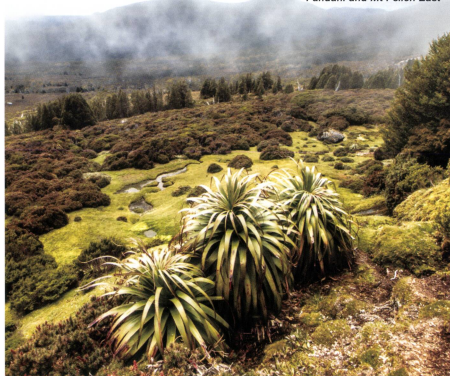
holds – to reach the rim of the summit plateau. From here the track levels out and turns sharply west to wind through boulders, dip into a delightful gully then climb the other side to reach a dramatic viewpoint on the mountain's southern edge. Giant dolerite columns fall away and views stretch past the jagged spires, across the plains to the mountains beyond.

Continue for another 700 metres to reach the true summit before returning via the same route – take care on the steep descent.

DAY 6: New Pelion Hut to Arm Road (12.4km, 3.5 hours)

The last day is a retracing of your steps from day one, allowing time to drive back to civilization afterwards.

Pandani and Mt Pelion East



Explore further ...

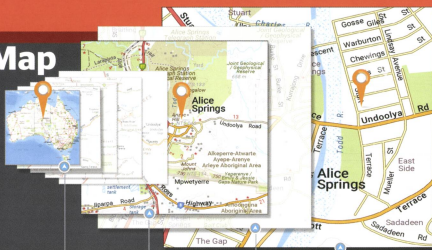
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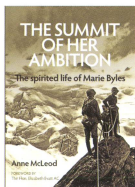
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THE SUMMIT OF HER AMBITION: THE SPIRITED LIFE OF MARIE BYLES – GUEST BOOK REVIEW BY GEOFF MOSLEY

by Anne McLeod (Self published, \$39.95)

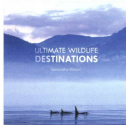
Anne McLeod, a freelance journalist, has produced this long-overdue biography of the remarkable Marie Byles, detailing her many achievements as a pioneer lawyer, women's rights activist, mountaineer, bushwalker and conservationist. What is doubly remarkable about Marie's life, as the author shows so well, is how these many diverse activities linked up to deliver benefits to the wider community. Among the lasting memorials to her efforts are the protected areas of Bouddi National Park and the Barren Grounds Nature Reserve. The book deserves a wide readership because the author holds up a looking glass on each of the different phases of Marie's life and her diverse achievements, which include being the first woman admitted to legal practice in New South Wales, her overseas mountain climbing activities, the holding of several important positions on two of the main New South Wales conservation groups of the 1930s, and her long search for spiritual enlightenment. The book certainly has the potential to inspire others but the question is 'will anyone come near to matching what Marie achieved?' Purchase can be made via the author's website: www.annemcleod.com.au



BIRDS OF THE WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND & GREAT BARRIER REEF & WHERE TO FIND THEM

by Lloyd Nielsen (Self published, \$45)

Written, illustrated and published by leading Australian amateur ornithologist Lloyd Nielsen, this edition acts as an update to his earlier version of the same name. As a regional field guide, this book is a must-have for any birders visiting either of the World Heritage Areas that it covers. Including details on 451 avian species, *Birds of The Wet Tropics of Queensland* allows the reader to identify a bird by colour, habits or habitat, including additional information on difficult-to-differentiate species. Drawing on his years of personal experience, Nielsen even provides up-to-date details on the best birding areas, with information on getting there and what species are likely to be seen. He even includes notes on what to look for when purchasing binoculars and telescopes. All told, this is a thorough, current reference covering one of our nation's great biodiversity sites that, when taken in combination with Nielsen's charming illustrations, results in field guide that sets a benchmark for the genre.



ULTIMATE WILDLIFE DESTINATIONS

by Samantha Wilson (New Holland Publishers, \$29.99)

UK-born Samantha Wilson is a well-heeled traveller with a keen interest in the natural world. Drawing on these two key traits, Wilson presents her top 100 destinations for seeing some of the world's most iconic wildlife in their natural environments. A photo-centric paperback, the book would be suitable for the coffee table – and the imagery would certainly draw the interest of any casual browser. But, for the dedicated traveller and zoological enthusiast, the book provides additional use as a basic guidebook, with details on focus species, 'how to get there' and references for further research. The book may even hold interest for those looking for a more local adventure, with Australia being featured five times throughout the list.



ENDEAVOURING BANKS: EXPLORING COLLECTIONS FROM THE ENDEAVOUR VOYAGE

by Neil Chambers, foreword by Sir David Attenborough (New South Books, \$69.99)

A research fellow in the School of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University, Neil Chambers previously worked at the Natural History Museum in London where he curated an exhibition on the Endeavour voyage. Having also written on the topic of collections in several other publications, Chambers has a particular interest in the naturalist Joseph Banks, who's work is also the focal point of this large, hardcover tome. The result is a catalogue of some of the most novel pieces collected or drawn by Banks' team as they accompanied Captain James Cook on his voyage of 1768-71. A wide array of botanical and zoological specimens is depicted alongside landscape and figure drawings, creating the literary equivalent of a cabinet of curiosities that won't fail to delight anyone interested in the natural history of the Pacific and the scientific habits of 18th Century explorers.

Directory

The Wild Directory is a reference point for outdoors-related businesses worldwide. List your firm for only \$48 an issue (\$58 in spot red).

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Since Tumut's local outdoor store Tom's Outdoors began stocking the well-reputed Norwegian tent brand, Helsport, we've been dying to get our hands on one. Fortunately, we weren't to be denied an opportunity and have spent a total of four nights over two trips in the Reinsfjell 2 (two-person, three-season hiking tent). The double vestibule design is ideal for storing luggage and cooking in poor weather, which the 40D outer efficiently repels. While the tent's total weight (3kg) may be a negative for some, we found it manageable to carry between two people and could be used year round in most parts of Australia. Favourite features include the internal gear pockets and light-reflecting guy lines making the tent easy to spot and less of a hazard at night.



A life in outdoor entrepreneurship has led Emma Walker to our shores with a new concept for the local industry, recently founding events company She Went Wild

I have always loved the outdoors my entire life, and it's one of the things I'm most grateful to my parents for. I have very fond memories of camping, walking, waterskiing as well as converting a van into a campervan with my father and driving from the UK to Paris with the family.

As I got older I never let go of my love for the outdoors, and as much as I enjoyed the jobs that I had after university, none of them connected me to being in the outdoors enough. Kris (my partner) and I set up a glamping company in the UK before we moved to Australia, it was hard work but I loved it. For a summer we lived on site, welcomed families, friends and couples who never spent much time in the outdoors and so came to experience our accommodation for a taste. It was so nice seeing the kids playing out until sunset without an iPad in sight.

After experiencing a couple of stressful years – between my partner's illness and both of our stressful jobs – we decided that it was time to make a change in our life. We had spent less time doing the things that we love last year, and so She Went Wild was born to connect us, and other women to the outdoors and all the benefits that it brings with it, while allowing myself to still be engaged in events, which is one of my passions.

Having spent many years exploring Great Britain, I have to say one of the most significant differences in coming to Australia is the weather and how you prepare for it. In the UK it can be so unpredictable and you can get caught out very quickly: you're on the bottom of the mountain and its glorious, a couple of hours into the hike your soaked from the rain.

I do find the Aussie heat to be quite difficult to battle with sometimes hiking during summer, which is why Autumn is my favourite time of year here.

My favourite activity has to be diving. I find nothing more relaxing than hearing only your breathing in the silent. Going underwater is like going to another planet, there's all this life underneath that you just don't get to see otherwise. I recently did my first night dive, which I was petrified about, but it turned out to be the best dive I've ever done.

Camping generally has to be pretty high on my list of favourite activities as well. After all, who doesn't love sitting around a

crackling campfire? I once heard it referred to as nature's television. I couldn't agree more.

I love the outdoors because it allows me to feel free. I feel like I'm not part of the rat race, the pressures of technology, time and to-do lists. I love nothing more than turning up somewhere and finding out that there's no mobile reception, allowing me to mentally switch off and enjoy the quiet, relax and engage with nature.

There's recently been some talk about the difference between genders in their experience of the outdoors. While my new venture is positioned specifically for women, I don't feel like there's any more danger to women than men when it comes to outdoor activities, for example. I think the times are changing and more and more companies are seeing females as a major consumer of outdoor gear, and I think we'll soon see a lot more choice as a result. In some sports it is hard to get the right equipment, but with more women becoming a part of the outdoor industry I'm excited to see how this will impact many companies' decisions. That's not to say that men aren't welcome to attend my event, of course! It's just that it's marketed at women.

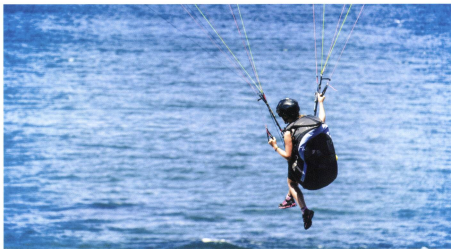
For this reason, I've been working hard to set up She Went Wild: a community of retailers, consumers and most importantly – adventurers. We want to empower women to embrace the great outdoors and take positive steps in improving their health and lifestyles. In doing so, we hope to highlight some of women's greatest achievements, and encourage women of all ages and backgrounds to find their place in the outdoors.

From this came the idea to have a dedicated event, which will take place on November 6th, presenting an opportunity for consumers and retailers alike to experience developing trends as well as being able to purchase products, book training courses, and network with others who share the same interests.

She Went Wild will also be hosting a series of workshops and courses with companies leading up to the event to encourage women to try new things.



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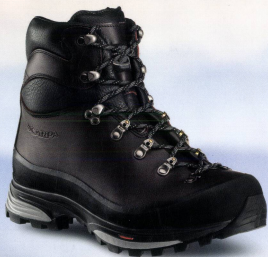
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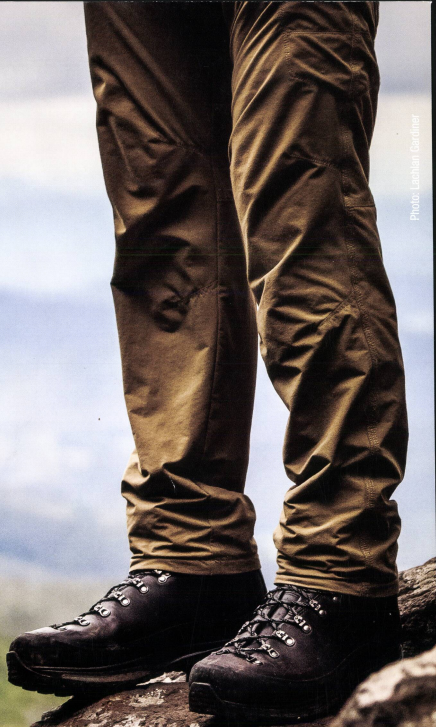


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